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THE LAPSE OF VIVIEN EADY

BY

CHARLES MARRIOTT

AUTHOR OF

"THE COLUMN" "MRS. ALMER'S ELOPEMENT" ETC.

COLONIAL EDITION

(This Edition is for Circulation in the British Colonies only)

LONDON

T. FISHER UNWIN

ADELPHI TERRACE

1905

TO THE MEMORY
OF
MY MOTHER

THE LAPSE OF VIVIEN EASY

CHAPTER I

VIVIEN EASY awoke at half-past six. She yawned, stretched, raised herself on her elbow and looked across the room at the row of books on the mantelpiece. From that distance and in that subdued light she could not read their titles, but she knew them all by their shapes and colours. Her lips were pursed up reflectively as her eyes travelled along the row, from Landor in blue to Emerson in green, without lighting up. There was something against every author when she weighed the cost of the effort to reach him: even Masterlinck, who so suited that reticent hour of the dawn, seemed hardly worth while. Frankly, she was not in the humour for reading that morning.

Putting her long hands behind her head, she leaned back on the pillow, and her hardly awakened

perpendicular trails of smoke from the chimneys of cottages on the other side of the valley.

Vivien remained at the window looping up her hair. She opened and shut her eyes, and breathed in the sharp air as if through every sense she would capture the essence of the morning. She was a long-limbed girl of twenty-three, at present too pale and too thin. Her profile was set with that startling purity of line which occurs now and then in Cornishwomen, and in combination with soft, lustreless black hair suggests an Oriental mixture in the race. Her eyes greenish-grey, their whites tinged with blue, were brooding and remote; her mouth, blunted at the corners and of a very faint rose colour, was rather wistful in expression. Evidently she would not alter much with age, and she would be a strikingly handsome old woman.

Vivien Eady, with her widowed mother, had now lived for three weeks in a furnished cottage in the Penolver Valley. Their home was in Kensington, and Vivien had never been to Cornwall before. During the past year her health had been pulled down by a succession of colds, and though there was no suspicion of lung disease she needed a change, and her doctor believed that a few months in the equable climate of her mother's native county would work a complete recovery.

Vivien went softly down the stairs which led directly into the kitchen, startling the little maid Janie, who sat on her heels eating a hunk of saffron cake before the newly lighted fire. Janie, a thick-set, red-faced girl, grinned sheepily in answer to Vivien's "Good-morning," but did not move. Vivien stayed for a few minutes watching the little cactus-coloured flames, listening to the crackling of the furze, and inhaling its odour. She wished that she had got up half an hour earlier and lit the fire herself. Not out of consideration for Janie, but because, as she now discovered, she liked lighting fires. It had never struck her as a privilege before this moment. Next year, when she was Mrs. Harpur, she would not be in a position to light fires, she supposed, and the thought gave her a faint feeling of regret. There would be other duties, of course; higher duties. Selwyn Harpur was headmaster of a large preparatory school for boys in Buckinghamshire. He had a great reputation for scholarship and for his influence on character. Now Vivien remembered something he said to her when they first became engaged:—

"Your life will be very full; every hour will bring a duty peculiarly your own—a sacred duty, because nobody can do it but yourself. That is fulfilling your life: to leave anybody to do what anybody can do, and concentrate your powers

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upon that which is in the highest sense your own business."

"A very full life," she thought now; "yes, that's what I want"; and then, suddenly aware that Janie was becoming embarrassed by her abstracted attitude and stare at the fire, she said—

"Do you like lighting fires, Janie?" and the girl answered in tune, "It's all in the day's work, miss."

Vivien went out into the little garden, tilted sideways to catch the sun, and already making a brave show of crocuses and anemones, unopened because of the hour. She went peering round the borders to look for the spears of bulbous things. Early polyanthus *narcissi* were in flower, and the daffodils stood in bud like little rockets waiting to be tipped with fire. Here and there the coiled, shell-like leaves of tulips and the blunter tips of hyacinths were pushing through the soil. Vivien felt a mysterious sympathy with all this race of flowers. The texture of their petals thrilled her to touch. Beside them, all other flowers were a little commonplace. She felt for crocuses and irises in particular a curious passion which had in it a touch of shame; like the shame she had felt as a little girl for certain words. Even now she did not like to say the word "love."

and a crocus or an iris was too personal a thing to give even to her lover.

From the garden, which, though so small, was surrounded as if against more than weather by a thick wall of gigantic stones, she went down the lane and loitered for a few minutes on the bridge, watching the trout in the golden pool where the stream broadened over gravel. She wished that she could dip her hands into the water and take up one of the fish to examine its gleaming sides. Mr. Stott had said that his son would teach her trout-fishing, but she was not sure whether the sport was not too cruel for her. Until she had seen a trout killed, she did not know how it would affect her. She hated to think of warm-blooded animals dying, but she fancied that she would not feel the same about a fish. Selwyn's views about fishing she did not know, but she had read that Matthew Arnold was a fisherman, and without any sense of irony she supposed that Selwyn also would approve of the sport. The ash trees which she had seen from her bedroom window grew along the banks of the stream, and above the bridge they were multiplied into a little wood. Somewhere in the recesses of the wood a woodpecker laughed hysterically, as if the raffish-looking jackdaws were telling funny stories, too good for humanity to overhear.

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Across the stream the lane ascended to join the main road which ran down the valley to the sea. Women shaking mats or emptying teapots at their cottage doors looked at Vivien curiously; they were not yet used to her, though one or two addressed her by name. Her mother had proudly pointed out that, in spite of their name, the Penpiver people were not so suspicious of them as they ordinarily were of strangers—as if they recognised blood in their appearance. Vivien met several children moving secretively, and she thought that before breakfast all children wear a look not exactly of wrong-doing, but of carrying out some private business in the confidence of the morning, itself young, not to be trusted to full day or the cognisance of grown-up people. Two children, a boy and a girl, stealthily joined her, as if by a sort of freemasonry recognising in her a kindred spirit.

"John Prowse caught a great dog badger last night," said the boy in the tone of one resuming a conversation, and the girl said, "I saw an otter once. Its young one mewed like a cat."

Though it was only mid-February the air was comparatively mild. The faintest possible wind came up from the south-east, and the grey dappled sky—the even tone breaking up before

the light like curdled milk—gave promise of a fine day. Vivien was supremely happy: the slight languor of ill-health in her limbs gave a zest to her enjoyment of the delicious morning, her mother was the dearest woman in the world, and spring was coming. To-day she was certain to hear from her lover, she was twenty-three, and she was going to be married next year. Her eyes moistened with the feeling that life was too good; that there must be some danger lurking behind all this kindness: as when she spoke to the Valley people about the weather, they shook their heads and talked about March winds. Involuntarily Vivien put out her hand and took that of the little girl by her side. She wanted to kiss the child's face, but was too shy to do so.

Now she came in sight of the sea, placid as a mirror, and so pale that it was nearly impossible to distinguish the line of the horizon; and distant vessels seemed to be sailing in air. It was full tide, and the soundless moving of the water inside the quay suggested a laughing conspiracy of the elements. Half a dozen boats were drawn up on the boulders, and four cottages stared blankly down at their own images, as if the sea had stolen a march upon them while they slept. From here vision of the sea was narrowed by the two points of land which pro-

tected the Cove. The road ran down to the quay, but where Vivien stood a narrow path branched off round the headland on her right. Vivien knew that by keeping to the cliff path for a quarter of a mile or so she would clear the point and get a full view of the open sea. Her mood required that; she needed infinity for the expansion of her heart. Perhaps the strongest ingredient in her love for Selwyn Harper was a profound gratitude to God. If there had been a church within easy reach, she would have gone to it.

Being ignorant of the independent and enterprising habits of the Cove children, she did not like to take the two youngsters with her along the cliff path, which in places she knew to be very dangerous. Besides, she wanted to be alone. She released her hand from the tightly clasping little fingers, and stooping, hurriedly and shyly kissed the dirty little face, saying—

"Now, kiddies, run along home to breakfast."

The children reluctantly obeyed, turning round to stare at her reproachfully after she had begun to climb the path. The track went up and down, following the broken outline of the headland. Sometimes Vivien had to clamber over or squeeze between fallen rocks, and again the path skirted sheer gulfs where deep water faintly

muttered in hidden caves. On her right hand the cliff rose above her in a long slope, rock-bestrewn and clothed with gorse and dead bracken. At the top she knew there was a wide land of level fields, with here and there a grey cluster of farm buildings with a name of its own, and the dignity of a "village."

Between her and the backbone of the headland which ended in a pinnacle of grey rock the path made a wide sweep round the lip of a semi-circular chasm, and on the far side, as if in warning, there stood a plain granite cross whose history she had not yet learned. About midway between Vivien and the cross a donkey fed on the coarse grass at the very edge of the abyss. He was tethered by a long rope which had become twisted round rocks and zigzagged across the path. Vivien stopped consideringly. She could pass by making a wide detour and scrambling through the gorse bushes, but the grass was very wet and her shoes were thin. She felt nervous about stepping over the rope lest the donkey should move suddenly and trip her up; and she was not sure that she might not startle him over the edge of the cliff. So she held out a handful of grass and made coaxing noises; but the beast, so far from being pleased by her advances, bared his yellow teeth and laid back his ears with a vicious expression.

"Grr! you beast!" she said, and flinging down the grass she left the path, and holding up her skirts began gingerly to pick her way between the gorse bushes.

At that moment a man coming from the opposite direction appeared on the backbone of the point.

"Hullo!" he greeted her casually.

"Oh, good-morning, Mr. Stott," she answered.

The new-comer was a burly, bearded man of about forty, dressed in rough tweeds, bare-headed, and carrying a towel slung round his neck.

"Anybody can see you're not a country-woman, Miss Eady," he said, with a laugh. He smacked the donkey on the flank with a broad palm and called, "G'wan, Jack!" and the beast, miraculously freeing his tether, ambled up the slope.

Vivien thanked Mr. Stott, but protested against being despised for not being a country-woman.

"Oh, we're going to make you one, sure enough," he said. He stood with his legs wide apart, looking down at her. His blue eyes twinkled, and his strong white teeth showed in a smile, as if some touch of primness in the girl amused him. He was ruddy, and tanned; he had a rather wide nose, fine brows, and a tumbled

shock of brown hair, already grizzling. When he laughed, big veins stood out on his forehead and neck. Just at that moment he was thinking that Vivien's slight look of ill-health lent her charm: if he had tried to describe her in a word, he would have called her "disturbing."

Vivien was not quite sure whether she liked Mr. Stott or not. He had called upon her mother the week after their arrival.

"I understand we are going to be neighbours for a few months," he said, "so the sooner we get our introductions over the better."

Vivien thought him rather overbearing in his manner. While she was considering how best to employ the new day, he seemed already to have taken hold of it rudely with both hands. He spoke rather too loudly and too forcibly, she thought.

"You're looking better already, Miss Eady," he said now, with a nod. "How's your mother? Give her my compliments, and I'm going to send her down some very special rhubarb, if she'll have it. God, isn't it beautiful!" he said, with a deep sigh, looking seaward.

A little shaken by his gusto, Vivien began to choose words to describe the effect of the place upon her, but fancying that he listened ironically she broke off, and asked him about the cross. They walked to it together. The cross was

comparatively new and sharply cut. Carved upon it were the initials "D. R." and a date, seven years earlier. Stott told her the story. A young man, spending a fortnight's holiday with his mother and sister, at Penolver, went out alone one afternoon to collect plants. He did not return at night, and searchers found his battered body in the water immediately below the spot where the cross was erected. Still clutched in his hand was a tiny and very rare fern.

"How horrible!" said Vivien, turning away with a shiver.

"Oh, it was good enough," said Stott, with deep conviction, after a little pause. "Lord, yes, to die like that, in full health, reaching out for the thing he wanted. I'm not sentimental about death," he added hastily, "I hate the idea of death, but I'd rather go like that than in my bed."

His way of speaking about death shocked her.

"But for such a trivial thing," she said.

"Nothing is trivial," he said gravely, "if you want it, and if you don't want it everything is trivial. There," he added, with a laugh, "I've made an epigram for you," and touching his forelock he strode away.

Vivien slowly climbed the ridge which over-

looked a long suave depression in the cliff, sloping gradually to the sea and ending in a grassy headland. In the protected, crescent-like curve there was a series of rocky pools. This was evidently the place, thought Vivien, where Stott had been bathing, and she resented the idea. His personality left her exhausted and rather irritated. She was annoyed that he should have come upon her in such a ridiculous quandary : she could imagine him laughing with his yokels over the discomfiture of the London lady. Her few minutes' talk with him, too, had robbed her of the opportunity to think about Selwyn Harpur in the presence of the open sea : it was already time to return to breakfast. Stott, she thought, compared unfavourably with her lover. He was technically a gentleman, she knew, and she had heard him talk about the time when he was at Oxford, but he seemed to have a sort of contempt for learning. Now he practised farming : he was trying all sorts of experiments in fruit and vegetable growing, and, perhaps because of the life he had adopted, he seemed to have lost refinement. Vivien thought of him with always earth on his hands. He talked too much about eating and drinking. What a funny idea, by the way, to send a lady something to eat ! She liked a man to be masculine, but also rather ascetic. Like her

lover. She could imagine Stott beating down her lover in argument by sheer loudness of voice. A man must be disgustingly robust to bathe in the open sea in February.

Vivien only waited long enough for Stott to get well out of sight, and then walked slowly home. Janie, who was standing by the door of the cottage looking out, disappeared on her approach. As Vivien passed through the little garden, she picked a few narcissi, and the cool, wet feel of them brought her peace again.

CHAPTER II

MRS. EADY was already pouring out tea when Vivien entered the sitting-room. Mother and daughter were alike, but Mrs. Eady was the smaller and sprightlier. Her eyes were dark brown instead of grey, and her skin was the colour of old ivory. Her black hair was hardly touched with grey.

The tall girl leaned over her and kissed her passionately, with "Oh, mother, I'm so happy!"

"I had to begin," said Mrs. Eady, "I was so hungry, and Janie saw you coming."

Vivien stuck her flowers in a little blue ginger jar and placed it on the table. Possibly because the likeliest visitors to Penolver were painters, the owners of the cottage had furnished and decorated it prettily. The room in which the Eadys sat was painted a pale primrose colour, there were old Dutch tiles in the fireplace, and the little curtain across the window was of a dainty pattern. Two or three sunny oil sketches in copper frames hung on the walls, and the rest

of the pictures—photographs of Early Italian paintings—were Vivien's own. There were the *Giovanna Tornabuoni* of Botticelli and the *Parnassus* of Mantegna.

Mother and daughter breakfasted upon home-made bread and butter, boiled eggs, cream and honey. In spite of Vivien's condemnation of Mr. Stott's interest in food, she herself ate with a good appetite, though perhaps it was the poetic idea of cream and honey that principally appealed to her. The delicate China tea was none the less pleasing to her palate for being sipped out of a pretty cup of old blue and gold.

"You're getting tremendously energetic," said her mother, looking at her humorously.

"It was really a sort of laziness," said Vivien, feeling an odd need for exact truthfulness. "I couldn't make up my mind what to tackle in the way of reading, so I went out."

"Much better," said Mrs. Eady, helping herself to another egg. Her tone suggested that she did not wholly approve of her daughter's intellectual interests. And indeed she was just then hoping that the air of Penolver would affect more than Vivien's bodily health. She liked and admired Selwyn Harpur, but she had a keener or perhaps a more mature sense of humour than her daughter. She had a whole stock of homely sayings, such as "The proof of the

pudding is in the eating," and "Ah, well, we shall see what we shall see," and she believed them.

"I met that fatiguingly robust person Mr. Stott," said Vivien presently; adding, "Oh, by the way, he sent messages, and you're to have positively the last word in rhubarb."

The tone and the phrasing were Selwyn Harpur's, as Mrs. Eady perceived, and as a *riposte* she used the homeliest form of speech that came to her mind.

"He's very neighbourly," she said.

"'M—yes. Do you like him, mother?"

"I'm afraid I do," said Mrs. Eady, with an odd little movement of her eyebrows. Vivien looked at her quickly. She sometimes suspected that her mother was affectionately laughing at her. Particularly down here in her native air she seemed to gain an assurance failing her in Kensington, as if she were backed up by her surroundings, and to become quite impudent. As if relenting, however, Mrs. Eady explained—

"One grows less exacting as one gets older."

"How old should you say Mr. Stott was?" asked Vivien.

"Anywhere in the early forties," said her mother, without hesitation; "his boy is nearly fourteen."

"Mother, you're an awful gossip," said Vivien reprovingly. "When are you going to call on Mr. Stott?"

It was nearly on Mrs. Eady's lips to say, "As soon as Selwyn has pronounced judgment," but instead she tamely replied—

"Whenever you like."

During the rest of the meal Vivien was wondering how people so sweet and lovable as her mother could be content to live and think on such a comparatively low plane. She supposed that Selwyn was right when he said that humanity was advancing and that each new generation was a little ahead of the last.

After breakfast, Vivien intended to have two hours at German. She took down her books and carefully cut some blank paper into small squares. Then she refilled her fountain pen, making a special journey into the kitchen to wash out the little syringe after she had used it. She sharpened her pencil to a very fine point, and then found it necessary to wash her hands. Altogether, she made great preparations for her work; it might have been said that she dallied over her preparations. Before sitting down to the table, she placed the little ginger jar of narcissi at her elbow, so that her work should be associated in her mind with something beautiful.

But for all that her work progressed haltingly.

She was translating selected passages out of Novalis' unfinished romance, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, and somehow, though she had been assured that the work was beautiful, and though she was ready to assert that it was beautiful, she could not feel that her nature responded to its pages as it did to the narcissi, for example. They were good to see, to smell, to touch, and to think about ; they needed no effort to appreciate them. It was not the difficulty of reading a foreign language that troubled her so much as the feeling that she was working only with her intelligence. Though reason said "Yes," she could not persuade herself that the task was worth while. She knew that if her heart had been in it no difficulty would have dismayed her. The effortless perfection of the flowers when she turned to them reproached her : they were narcissi with all their might. Stott's words came back to her : "Nothing is trivial if you want it, and if you don't want it everything is trivial." That seemed to be true, and Vivien had the horrified suspicion that not only did she not want *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, but that she did not want even German. Still, she stuck to her translation, persuading herself that she was in an idle mood, though she knew well enough that she was not. About eleven o'clock her mother came into the room with a bundle

of pink and golden rhubarb, and Vivien was ashamed how glad she felt of the interruption.

"Here is the essential, undeniable sign of approaching spring for me," said Mrs. Eady. "I've a gross mind. But I didn't disturb you to tell you that. I wanted to know whether we should stew it or make a pie."

"Oh, a pie for me," said Vivien, rising to her mother's humour. "Penolver air makes me want to use my teeth on something."

"Compliment to my pastry," said her mother. "But I was going to suggest that you make a pie while I write letters, so that we can get out together directly after dinner."

Vivien did not know that she was being managed, nor how eagerly her mother hung upon her answer. She looked at her books consideringly, meanwhile winding a strip of the pink, transparent rhubarb skin round her forefinger.

"All right," she said, looking up. Her mother was looking at her finger with a smile, though her eyes were moist. She remembered Vivien doing the same thing when she was a child. This was not the first time since they had come to Penolver that she had noticed the reappearance of little tricks and traits, trivial enough, which Vivien had apparently

outgrown. Therefore she smiled. It takes little to please some women.

In the kitchen, while Vivien rolled out her pastry she was busy with an elaborate defence of the pleasure she took in the work. Selwyn was by no means an admirer of merely clever or learned women : he liked them to be many-sided, and above all feminine. Presently, when she wrote to him, she would say, "I made a pie this morning," as a philosopher might say, "I played hop-sotch." That would give Selwyn a text, if he thought her frivolous. She liked the colour and the fresh smell of the rhubarb as she cut it into little chunks ; the wheezing noise of the knife going through the stalks ; the cool feel of the flour on her bare arms. The kitchen window was open, letting in the freshness of the garden and the lisp of the stream over shallows. A great mass of white rock-cress against the wall was already haunted with bees, and the sepals of the cloth-of-gold crocuses were opened flat upon the soil, as if in ecstasy to drink the sunlight.

"Oh, it was good to die like that, in full health, reaching out for the thing he wanted." At this distance of time the truth rather than the bluntness of Stott's words impressed her. It certainly would be terrible to die reaching out for what one did not want. There was

little danger of that for her. During her adolescence she had passionately wanted knowledge, and there was nobody to guide her. Then Selwyn Harpur had come, and opening her eyes to the full extent of her ignorance, had shown her the first steps of the way to acquire knowledge. In ministering to her desire for knowledge he had awakened another desire—the desire for love. Vivien's eyes grew dreamy as she remembered the morning he had first spoken. They were bending over the *Odyssey* together, reading Ulysses' words to Nausicaa—

“For no power on earth is stronger than the husband and wife who are of one heart: their enemies cannot hurt them, and their friends rejoice, but they know their own joy best themselves.”

At this point Selwyn had put his hand over hers, and she could feel him trembling, while the colour deepened in his fine face.

“Vivien,” he said, “will you be my wife?”

At the time she had been startled by the directness of the question, but afterwards she felt that anything less austere would not have been true to his character. Well, Selwyn Harpur had begun to satisfy her desire for knowledge, he had awakened and begun to satisfy her desire for love, and now—— But here she blushed rosy, and began to put away her cooking utensils.

Now that her pie-making and her dreaming were done, it was not worth while beginning anything fresh before the postman came, so she put on her red tam-o'-shanter and walked out to meet him. The postman came from Porthlew, walking five miles over the fields, and he approached the valley from the seaward end. Vivien saw his uniformed figure appear on the skyline just after the whistle of the quarry on the other side of the Cove had blown twelve o'clock. The path he was to take zigzagged down the side of the valley, in places hidden by thickets of blackthorn and furze. Even at that distance Vivien could see that he was reading a newspaper. Vivien had been amused when Stott told her that he knew by the condition of the paper sent to him daily that the postman slipped the wrapper to read it on the way; but the joke seemed to have lost point now. As if aware that he was under criticism, where the path disappeared behind a clump of furze the postman stopped for a few minutes to read unobserved. When the peaked cap again appeared, Vivien stared at him fixedly, hoping that by some telepathic communication he might learn her opinion of him. To cheat her mind, she walked back up the road, looking carefully under the hedges on either side for primroses. The celandines were out, and the

little stitchwort, and close by a cottage a clump of snowdrops had taken to the road, and now like chicken-hearted highwaymen stood huddled together, startled by their own audacity. But there were no primroses. Four dusty quarrymen with red necks and scalded ears swung past her on their way home to dinner. They touched their caps respectfully. One of them had three primroses stuck behind his ear.

Vivien gave it up with a laugh, and turning round walked briskly down into the Cove. By the time she reached the stone slab which served for a bridge over the stream the postman was within twenty yards of the bottom of the path, and falling over his own feet with anxiety to fulfil his duty. Vivien prepared to greet him with something subtly sarcastic about news from the Far East, but seeing him open his bag and untie a bundle of letters she relented. "After all, he's very young," she thought indulgently. The boy, stumbling with embarrassment, blushed and lifted his peaked cap, saying, "A letter for you, miss." •

Vivien did not open her letter immediately. Holding it in her hand, she looked about luxuriously for the best place to read it in. If her lover could have seen her then, he must have been flattered to observe that she was less im-

patient to know what he said than to receive word from him. Just this side of the bridge a little path branched off to go round the cliff. This was the sunny side of the Cove, and the gorse was coming into flower and scenting the air with the faint odour of cocoa-nut. Every green thing was at least three weeks more forward here than on the other side, where Vivien had walked before breakfast. She followed the path until she came to a little plateau, the floor of an abandoned quarry, now grassy, which overhung the sea. The gash in the cliff was mantled with ivy, the tumbled blocks of stone were lichen and weatherworn. The place, completely sheltered from the east and very rocky, held the sunlight like a cup. Standing here, one had an enchanting view of the mouth of the valley, as if from a boat at sea. Vivien found a comfortable spot, and sat down to read her letter.

Selwyn Harpur wrote an admirable love letter—gay and tender, and yet inspired with a deep seriousness.

“I take your sunny Cornwall into the classroom,” he wrote, “and boys’ voices are mingled with the voice of the sea made articulate through lips that I love.” He spoke of new books he had been reading, and announced his intention of sending her a parcel of books, considerably describing what she was to find in them. But

for Vivien the core of the letter was in the following sentences :—

“ I am glad you are likely to meet interesting people, but I am sorry to damp your enthusiasm about Mr. Stott. I mistrust this ‘back to Nature’ notion. As an ideal it is already exploded, and in practice it generally means that a man has not the energy or the courage to accept the responsibilities of his own time and order. Of course I know nothing against Mr. Stott, but I hear that he was considered eccentric when he was at Oxford, and it is my experience that cultivated men who shun civilisation have nearly always a reason which does not reflect altogether favourably upon their character. If I were your mother, I should use discretion in the acquaintance. Don’t you think that Mr. Stott’s anxiety to make friends with new-comers is rather significant? I trust he will not want your mother to put any money into his agricultural schemes ! ”

Disappointment was perhaps the feeling uppermost in Vivien’s mind. She might easily have thought and even said worse things about Stott than her lover suggested, but that he should betray littleness was a flaw in her ideal of him. She was also a little hurt in her pride. Under the careful phrases she fancied a slight coercion, and worse than that, a criticism of her mother.

Somehow, it seemed to her, Selwyn was trespassing beyond his province. In things of the mind she accepted his guidance unquestioningly, but she had no wish to be personally conducted through her life by him in matters of delicacy, though she did not recognise the significance of the division she made. "I trust he will not want your mother to put any money into his agricultural schemes" was, as she knew, Selwyn's little joke, but it struck her as heavy and in bad taste—vulgar even. No vulgarity, she felt, is so offensive as the vulgarity of a cultivated man.

When, at dinner-time, Vivien read extracts from Selwyn's letter to her mother, she left out the references to Stott, less out of consideration for him than because they reflected upon the writer.

CHAPTER III

AFTER the postman had delivered his letters in Penolver village, he took the lane which ascended the side of the valley nearly opposite the Eadys' cottage. He was not reading now, and if you had been permitted to look in his bag you would have seen yesterday's *Daily Chronicle* neatly folded and enclosed in a wrapper addressed in typewriting to Humphrey Stott, Esq., Rose-morran, Nr. Porthlew, Cornwall. When the postman untied his bundle of letters to give Vivien Eady hers, he had quite a number, many of them bearing foreign postmarks; for nearly everybody in Penolver had a relation in Africa or America or Australia; but now, besides Stott's *Daily Chronicle*, there remained in the bag only one letter, addressed to the same person. *

The lane ascended by easy stages between rude walls of boulders enclosing the little fields which Vivien had seen from her bedroom window. This side of the valley was now abandoned by the sun, and the edge of a cool grey

shadow, like rising water, had already crossed the stream, leaving the opposite slope dazzlingly bright and yellow by contrast. Heated by his task of going from door to door in the village, the postman walked with his peaked cap in his hand, but by the time he emerged from the shadow upon level ground he was quite sufficiently cooled. Before him was now a wide expanse of pasture land, divided by stone hedges, and bounded on the north by a range of rounded hills. The lane led up to a farm, protected except on the south, where it faced the sea, which appeared to have risen with the postman, and now showed as a grey plane on his left, by a horseshoe belt of fir trees. Several other farms were dotted at intervals about the tableland, and three miles away the tall square tower of St. Adrian Church, standing on a little eminence, dominated the skyline.

‘ On the flat expanse the sun beat down with astonishing fervour considering the season, though the air was as crisp and exhilarating as if it had been iced. Fleecy clouds moved across the blue sky from the south-east, and in the daisy-spotted fields young lambs capered about or played “ King of the Castle ” upon those upcropping granite rocks which are not the least difficulty of the Cornish farmer. An observant person, familiar with farming in this district,

would have remarked that here the hedges were sounder than usual, the ditches cleaner, and that every gate was in good repair and properly fastened. The lane ended in the townplace of the farm, a paved quadrangle surrounded on three sides by barns and cowsheds. If the postman had looked behind him now, he would have seen no trace of the Penolver Valley through which he had passed: his eyes would have travelled across perfectly flat country to the hills on the other side of Porthlew.

A white wooden gate gave entrance through the belt of firs to the garden in front of the dwelling-house. This was obviously the garden of an enthusiast. Besides the bulbous and other flowers already in bloom, it contained nearly every kind of flowering shrub that could be persuaded to grow in that climate. The house was of the common type, built of granite, with no decorative excrescences. There were red curtains in the windows, instead of the usual white muslin. Standing at the front door, the postman could see the sea framed by the two arms of the horseshoe belt of fir trees which protected the house and garden at the back and sides. If he had looked over the hedge on the far side of the garden, he would have seen that, a few hundred yards farther on, another valley similar to that of Penolver, but happier in that

it was turned farther to the west, ran down to the sea. It opened on the coast immediately beyond that grassy headland which had been the farthest point visible to Vivien Eady on her before-breakfast walk along the cliffs. Rosemorran Farm, in fact, stood upon a roughly triangular tableland. The base of the triangle was formed by the coast, the two sides by the valleys of Penolver and Rosemorran, which gradually losing distinction as they ascended from the sea, were united at the apex in a tract of broken moorland, crossed by the main road from Porthlew to the Land's End.

The postman's ring was answered by a decent-looking old woman in cap and apron, whose hard face brightened as she took the letter from his hand. As if continuing a conversation, the postman began immediately to talk about his feet. On consideration, indeed, he looked "like an example of use-adaptation. He was small-headed and thin-faced, but his legs were very long and his feet enormous.

"I'm sure I don't know what's coming over them," he said in a tone of despair. "Anybody would think that I walked far enough to please them during the day; but when I'm asleep they keep going up and down like a set of tin-stamps, and I get no rest at all."

The woman, whom he addressed as Mrs. Ford,

listened with a quietly amused smile. Apparently he looked upon her as his medical adviser, for she said—

“Well, I don’t know, John—unless you try a little hot ale with your supper.”

“Yes, I will,” he said eagerly, and lifting his cap he shambled quickly away, as if to try the remedy without loss of time.

Mrs. Ford did not close the door, but sedately following the postman through the garden gate, she crossed the townplace and ascended a flight of stone steps outside one of the barns.

“A letter from Master Hugh and your newspaper, sir,” she called gladly through the open door.

“Oh, come in, Mrs. Ford,” Stott’s deep voice answered her from the interior.

From the sunlit doorway, Stott was not immediately visible, and Mrs. Ford entered the loft, shading her eyes with her hand as she peered into the rich brown shadow, where she discovered him sitting with outstretched legs on the floor, cutting up seed potatoes with a table-knife. He was surrounded by piled-up trays of “shooted” potatoes, which when he had cut he placed carefully in a basket ready for planting.

He took the letter, saying kindly, “Wait a moment, Mrs. Ford,” as he tore open the envelope.

Not less eagerly than Vivien Eady did Stott

read the opening lines of his letter, but Mrs. Ford, waiting with an anticipatory smile, noticed that as he read on his colour deepened and the veins stood out on his forehead. Then he went very white. Still he did not look up or speak. She coughed gently.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Mrs. Ford," he said, looking up. "Master Hugh sends his love."

"There's nothing the matter, sir?" she asked apprehensively.

"Oh no; he's very well, thank you," he said almost roughly.

She murmured something, but went away with a troubled face, for all his assurance.

Stott laid the letter on the floor, picked up a potato and slowly shredded it into little pieces. His face had regained its natural colour, and he was breathing quietly. After a few minutes he took up the letter again, and read it through to the end with a smile that was very sad and yet subtly ironical.

The first half of the letter was quite satisfactory. Then came the disturbing passage:—

"By the way, I nearly forgot, such a rum sort of a chap called at the school and asked for me the day before yesterday. He said his name was Rutherford Lorraine and he seemed proud of it and he asked me if I had ever heard of him. I said no, and he looked surprised, and

then he asked me where you lived, and if I remembered my mother, and a lot of other questions. Of course I told him where you live I mean and then he said he was a great friend of yours and he must look you up. If you don't mind my saying so, I hope he isn't a friend of yours. I thought he was rather a rotter with long hair and an unhealthy sort of face, and besides he smelt of whisky. His clothes were seedy, but I wouldn't be ashamed of a chap because he was poor, but he looked as if he didn't wash. He said, 'Oh, by the way, can you lend me half a crown, to save me changing a cheque at the hotel?' I was awful rotted about him. Rousby said he was like the poet he saw at Sanger's where his pater took him at Christmas that the clown made fun of."

There need be no mystery about Mr. Rutherford Lorraine. In Penolver Cove Stott was supposed to be a widower with one boy. In reality he had never married, and "Master Hugh" was not his son. Even Mrs. Ford, trusted servant that she was, did not know of the relationship, or want of it, between the two.

When he left the University to join the staff of a daily newspaper Stott made the acquaintance of Rutherford Lorraine, a man of some talent, half actor, three-eighths journalist, and the rest poet, fairly well known in minor literary

circles as the author of a slim volume of erotic verse of the pale cheek and purple sins order—the proper fashion in the poetry of that period. Lorraine had celebrated the publication of a second edition of his poems by marrying a provincial parson's daughter who had drifted on to the stage—a feather-brained girl, already consumptive. Perhaps as much as anything the egregious inefficiency of the pair attracted Stott, and more than once he helped them out of monetary difficulties. Mrs. Lorraine showed her gratitude by imagining herself in love with him, and by fawning upon him in a way which her husband did not at the time appear to resent. But when her baby was six months old and she a confirmed invalid, Rutherford went to America, leaving behind him a letter in which he explained that his Hellenic soul would not any longer allow him to stand between two lovers—particularly illicit lovers; this, as Stott quite understood, without conscious cynicism; although Rutherford omitted to say that he was accompanied to his exile by the daughter—and heiress—of a Battersea publican. Out of sheer humanity, Stott supported the deserted woman during the few months of life that remained to her, and when she was on her deathbed he promised to look after the boy. Whether from morbid sentimentality or the piercing wisdom of a

dying mother, Stott could never make up his mind, she asked him to let the boy bear his name and be brought up to believe himself his son. With the easy-going man's disregard of probable complications, Stott agreed, and so convinced was he that Rutherford Lorraine would never trouble his Hellenic soul about his heir that he took no pains to conceal or to invent a story to explain the adoption.

Stott sent the baby to a worshipping and romantic aunt, and when Mrs. Lorraine had been buried at his expense he supposed that no further steps were necessary to cover up the baby's past. For two or three years Stott took only a friendly interest in the child, whom he saw at intervals, much as if he had been a pleasing sort of puppy ; but gradually, and as he himself suffered from the wear and tear of life, the little fellow crept into his heart. By the time he was thirty-two and Hugh seven years of age, Stott had ceased even to regret that the child was not his own, and feeling the love between them so spontaneous and so established, he laughed to scorn all theories of "natural affection." With love came naturally fierce jealousy, and only then Stott began to regret that he had not taken greater precautions to prevent the boy some day learning the truth about his parentage. Stott's hypothetical dead

wife was a standing joke amongst his Fleet Street acquaintances, and one or two of the more discreet among them urged him to tell the boy the truth while his character was still unformed ; but Stott, after all, had not the courage of his convictions, and would not risk the experiment. When, tired of journalism, he decided to take up farming, not the least factor in determining him to settle in a remote corner of England was his desire to remove the boy as far as possible from the associations of his early life. Of Rutherford Lorraine he heard only once in connection with a New York police-raid on publishers of pornographic literature. Hugh was now thirteen and in his second year at Gamages, a large foundation school in Devonshire.

Stott folded up the letter, put it in his pocket, and tried to go on with his task of cutting up potatoes. He looked across at the diamond-shaped patch of sunlight crossed by moving feathery shadows of the fir branches, and for some reason it reminded him poignantly of Hugh. The tears rushed into his eyes ; he rose and quietly closed the door, shutting out the sunlight.

"Oh, he shan't know!" he muttered passionately.

He was bitterly angry with Lorraine. His reappearance in England was only important

so far as it might affect Hugh. It was inconceivable to Stott that Lorraine wished to saddle himself with the support of his offspring ; indeed, from Hugh's letter, it seemed pretty evident that he did not even intend to claim the relationship. He was only a danger in that he might talk and set other people talking. Stott's aunt was dead, but there were probably half a dozen people in London who knew Hugh's history, and, as Stott now bitterly recognised, it is always an inconvenience for a child to have two fathers. He believed that Lorraine's only motive in making inquiries about himself was the desire to sponge upon him as he had sponged before. Lorraine certainly was not in a position to levy blackmail, but he would very likely write abject letters, and a five-pound note would keep him quiet for a considerable time.

The more Stott thought about the matter, the more he persuaded himself that it was not really worth worrying about. Looking at the letter again, he could even afford to be amused by the way the boy's observation tallied with his own memory of Lorraine. There was the man's silly pride in the sounding name which was not really his own. Rutherford's father had been frankly Lawrence, and had called his son Henry. It was so characteristic of Lorraine to keep to his adopted name when he might

with advantage have dropped it, and with prurient vanity to ask the boy whether he had heard of him. Stott could imagine the interview very well, he could call up the sound of Lorraine's voice—rather a fine speaking voice, with a sham-emotional thrill in it. He stood in the dark, smiling to himself, and elaborating a new theory of poetic criticism. There was a definite grade of poetry, he thought, written by men whose names resembled double surnames. Plain John or James or Richard might produce very good or very bad poetry, but the work of Lansdowne or Rutherford or Montmorency something-or-other was nearly certain to be mediocre.

By half-past one o'clock, when Stott was called to his dinner, he had nearly recovered his ordinary composure, and he was able to delight Mrs. Ford with glowing accounts of Master Hugh's doings at school. But his love for the boy was now made more poignant by vague uneasiness, all the more difficult to bear because he knew that the uncertain situation was caused by his own want of courage in the past.* Now that Hugh had seen and despised his father, it was too late to tell him the truth.

During the afternoon, while Stott was walking round the boundary of his estate at the edge of the Penolver Valley, he saw the Eadys making their way along the cliff path on the other side

of the Cove towards the only corner that now remained in sunlight—the little plateau where Vivien had read her lover's letter that morning. The sight of them gave him a fresh pang. He only now recognised that his feeling of pleasure and expectancy since making their acquaintance was due to his looking forward to presenting his boy to them when he came home at Easter. The only lack at Penolver was a reasonably young companion for Hugh during his holidays, and Stott had half unconsciously planned out quite a number of situations in which he saw Hugh and Vivien Eady together.

CHAPTER IV

DURING the next three or four days Stott awaited the postman's visit rather anxiously. Rutherford Lorraine did not write, however, but on the fifth day a letter came from Mrs. Packard, the woman in whose house Mrs. Lorraine had died. Mrs. Packard herself had moved to another part of London, and she had had some difficulty in finding Stott's address, she explained. She now wrote on her own initiative in a friendly way to tell Stott that Lorraine had been making inquiries about him and the boy. At the time when Stott adopted the child he did not think it necessary to warn Mrs. Packard to secrecy, and now, possibly with the idea of doing Stott a good turn by relieving him of a burden, whatever her personal opinion of Lorraine, she had evidently thought it her duty to give him all the information she could.

Stott was glad to get the letter, which confirmed his idea of the probable way in which Lorraine had tracked his child. The inter-

mediate steps were missing, but could easily be imagined. There was nothing to be done now, since Mrs. Packard had already innocently caused whatever harm she might, so Stott merely wrote thanking her for the trouble she had taken. He had decided not to say anything to Hugh about his visitor. He recognised the indiscretion of volunteering information, and he shrank from exciting curiosity about persons in the boy's mind; believing that in the crowded life of school an unrelated fact not commented on would be soon forgotten.

On the afternoon of the day when Stott received his letter from Mrs. Packard, the Eadys made their first call upon him. From the garden where he was sowing sweet peas, he saw them coming up the lane some minutes before they saw him, and he heard with amusement Vivien remark—

“Well, at least he keeps his barnyard clean.”

“Townplace, Miss Eady,” he corrected her, as they shook hands.

Vivien laughed frankly, and repeated the proverb about listeners. She was looking very pretty in a dark red tam-o'-shanter and grey waterproof cloak. Since she had come to Penolver her health had greatly improved; the hollows in her cheeks were disappearing, and she moved with more energy. It was a mild,

sunny day, with the wind in the west, and the climb had brought some colour into her face, enhancing the singular purity of her complexion.

"Then this is one of the exceptional moments," said Stott, eyeing her gravely. "However, there's only one thing you mustn't say about me, either in my presence or otherwise. Don't call me a 'gentleman-farmer.' Shall we go indoors?" he added, rather reluctantly.

Mrs. Eady, who had been poking about the border, hastily intervened.

"No; we'll finish the sweet peas, if you don't mind," she said. "I want to see how you do them, and perhaps we shall be able to find out why ours always come to grief in London, Vivien."

"Sparrows for certain," said Stott; "but I'll show you how to circumvent them. I shan't be a minute."

He finished raking in the drill, and sticking in a peg at intervals, he stretched a line of black cotton backwards and forwards along it. Vivien was amused to see how thoroughly interested the big man seemed in doing such a small matter.

"There you are!" he said. "The secret of all successful gardening is 'Can you do it easily?' It's like 'Is it accepted of song?'" he continued thoughtfully, rubbing his hands on his old shooting-jacket. "If anything you do is an awful bother, it's nearly certain you are going

the wrong way about it. But that goes farther than gardening, doesn't it?" he added, with a laugh, stooping to wind up his string line.

He led the way into the house, and opened the door of a large sitting-room, where a wreck-wood fire burned cheerfully.

"You'll excuse an old bachelor's untidiness, Mrs. Eady," he said. "I lost my wife years ago." He unnecessarily corrected the slip which neither of his hearers had noticed, and continued, "Mrs. Ford has got me pretty well in hand, but I break out occasionally."

Much as Vivien had resented Selwyn Harpur's gratuitous criticism of Stott, she still came with a definite notion of him derived from her lover's remarks. But the room did not by any means suggest a man who had lapsed from civilisation. It was eminently the room of a man keenly interested in life and things. The untidiness Stott referred to was only a matter of papers and magazines—the *Revue des Deux Mondes* among them—scattered about the room. There were plenty of books; there was a piano with music, evidently used, upon it; there were flowers on the mantelpiece; and the furniture though solid was in good taste. There were several pictures on the walls, and on one of them by the door Vivien recognised in passing the signature of a man who had been described

to her as one of the great masters of modern painting. Altogether, it did not look as if Stott had fallen behind his age; and there was this difference between his room and those of her more cultivated acquaintances in London: it was not a museum, and there was wanting the feverish air of advertising its owner's superiority.

Vivien sat down with a little involuntary sigh of relief. She knew that she had been prepared for boots and beer bottles under the sofa, and a general atmosphere derived from descriptions she had read of the dwellings of men who had degenerated on the outskirts of the Empire.

Mrs. Eady was at once attracted by Hugh's photograph.

"Yes, that's my son Hugh," said Stott; "he comes home from Gamages at Easter. I hope you'll like him."

Vivien took the photograph from her mother's hand. Stott watched her with a curious expression.

"You're thinking he isn't much like me," he said, anticipating the remark he expected her to make.

Vivien laughed.

"No, he isn't," she said; "but that isn't what I was thinking."

"What was it, then?" he insisted.

"Well, you'll think me rude," she said, "but I was wondering why you submitted to anything so commonplace as Gamages. I should have thought that you had theories of your own about education."

"Aha!" he chuckled, looking relieved as he took the photograph from her. "Now I'll tell you a secret, Miss Eady: I'm so monstrous a crank that I won't even practise my theories until I have spent a lifetime in experiment. You know the story about the celebrated oculist and the bushel of eyes, don't you? At the present stage I've arrived at the startling conclusion that it doesn't really matter much how you educate the ordinary boy so long as you feed him well, give him plenty of other boys to play with, and don't interfere with him too much. If he's extraordinary, there's no system of education that won't pinch him somewhere; the more system, the more pinches. Are you interested in the education of boys, Miss Eady?"

Vivien was not any more reconciled to being chaffed, by recognising that her mother was intensely amused. She felt that her loyalty to Selwyn was being attacked.

"Yes, a little," she answered, with some dignity; and Mrs. Eady, fearing that Stott might incautiously wound her, explained that Vivien's

future life was to be spent among boys. Stott reddened.

"I'm clumsy," he said; "but, seriously, there are several reasons why I sent Hugh to Gamages. It's the nearest decent school, and I rather like the way they mix boys up. I shall be all the more anxious now, Miss Eady," he continued, "to know what you think of my boy."

There was no mistaking Stott's sincerity when he talked about Hugh, and since it is always pleasant to find a weakness in a person one is a little afraid of, Vivien was glad to draw him out. She wondered exactly how long Mrs. Stott had been dead. Stott's remark when they entered had given her a clue, and since his stories about Hugh went back to the time when he was quite a baby, without any mention of his mother, she supposed that either she had died soon after he was born, or that Stott had not greatly mourned her. Anyhow, he showed none of the feeling that might have been expected in a widower recalling the time of his loss. That, Vivien supposed, was Mrs. Stott's photograph on the bookcase—the picture of a fluffy-haired, inferior-looking woman, with hollow cheeks and a careful smile, as if to conceal indifferent teeth.

Mrs. Eady, who saw rather deeper than her daughter, understood that in his way Stott was asking for comradeship for his boy when he came

to Penolver. Not knowing the new anxiety which had been awakened in his mind during the last few days, she was a little puzzled by his earnestness. It was as if the boy were afflicted in some way, though the photograph was that of a youngster healthy and happy-looking enough.

"You know," said Stott presently, "I feel that I can't treat you quite like ordinary visitors. You'll notice that I haven't yet asked you what you think about the Cornish people. Ordinarily that is the next question after 'How d'you do?' and I've come to look upon the answers as the measure of the speaker's intelligence."

"Then we're lucky," said Vivien; "but why?"

"Because the answers show whether they are in the habit of observing and considering conditions," he said. "Lots of people don't. I came across the remark of a writer—and a clever writer—the other day. He was talking about romance, and he said that Cornwall was a sentimental convention; that in reality the place and the people were of a piece with the rest of the country. No doubt he prided himself on his scientific disregard for poetical platitudes, but instead of exploding a fallacy he was only betraying his indifference to not only all the ologies but plain horse-sense. If you start by being born of people who by close intermarriage have preserved pronounced strains of Oriental

and Celtic blood, and are brought up in a land where you keep cromlechs in your back garden and play hide-and-seek in cave dwellings; in a land where farming is complicated by shares in a boat, and the business of a greengrocer includes copper-mining; where the Saracen and the Red-headed Dane are still credible bogies to frighten children with; if, though you live in the smallest village, you are daily brought into contact with people coming and going to and from the uttermost ends of the earth, so that Johannesburg and San Francisco and Penang and Quito are more familiar names to you than Bristol and Birmingham, it is more than a little likely that you will think and feel and act differently from the way you would if you were a native of Wolverhampton or Haywards Heath."

"But you're not a Cornishman?" said Mrs. Eady, who had waited impatiently for the end of his harangue.

"Not by birth," he answered, with a laugh. "No, I'm good, East Anglian; but I hope you're not too exclusive to accept a Cornishman by adoption."

"What made you come to Cornwall?" asked Vivien.

"Oh, for one thing, I wanted plenty of room," said Stott carelessly, "and for another, I found most other places too old-fashioned."

Vivien began to be impatient with his aggressive and dogmatic manner, and his last remark struck her as deliberate paradox.

"But I've always been told that the Cornish people are two hundred years behind the times," she said.

"So they are," said Stott coolly, "and that brings them about ten years ahead of the ordinary. If you try to correct their notions, they say, 'We belong to do this way,' which is unanswerable, and saves them from the fatal defect of thinking they're up to date and advanced and progressive. It's only when you give reasons that you place yourself, and that's what I call being old-fashioned."

With Harpur's letter fresh in her head, Vivien was extremely curious to know what had led Stott to take up farming as a profession, and she was glad when he suggested that after tea they might care to walk through the Rosemorran Valley, where he grew his fruit, flowers, and vegetables. Mrs. Ford came in with the tea, which she took with them. At first, though she was ashamed of the feeling, Vivien was a little embarrassed by the company of a woman who was frankly a servant. Evidently Stott's objection to the title "gentleman-farmer" extended to the reality "lady-housekeeper," for though he and Mrs. Ford were on the easiest

terms there was no pretence of equality. She addressed him as "sir," and spoke of him as "my master." She took her share in the conversation, however, and seemed intelligent and humorous. It was plain that she was devoted to Hugh, but Mrs. Eady noticed that when Stott was speaking about him she listened intently, as if she were not completely in her master's confidence about the boy, and for some reason was worrying about him. Altogether, Mrs. Eady looked forward with considerable interest to seeing Hugh Stott.

It was evident that Stott's interest in food, which had repelled Vivien, was not merely theoretical. Good bread and butter were to be expected in Penolver, but here in addition were all sorts of cunning little dainties—sweet and savoury sandwiches, and a preserve that might have been something Chinese converted to Christian uses. From a remark of Mrs. Ford's, the Eadys guessed that Stott himself was the confectioner, and under pressure he admitted that he was writing a cookery-book which was to supersede everything of the sort in existence.

"As a great privilege," he said to Mrs. Eady, "I'll let you look at my still-room. Only please don't explode my convenient reputation. As I have to pay an excise license, and as old-style distilling was associated with charming and

black magic generally, the people here hold me in fearful respect. They can't understand why I don't compete with the doctor—a more profound criticism than they know."

He took them into a long stone-paved room at the back of the house, which reminded Vivien of the combination of a public-house bar with a druggist's shop. The place was faintly odorous of lavender and rosemary and pot pourri. There were bins full of dried herbs and great glass jars of fruits preserved in syrup; and the long shelves were crowded with bottles of curious shapes filled with different coloured fluids—amber and rose and green and violet. On a slate slab under the window stood the fantastically curved glass retort of a still and other strange appliances.

"I spend my wet afternoons here," said Stott, after he had explained the principle of the still and the processes of maceration and percolation, "working out experiments. There are many worse ways of wasting one's time. For example, instead of trying to get the essence of spring into a bad sonnet or indifferent picture, I boil and condense and macerate and percolate and strain and filter and—*voilà*! here's the real thing in a little bottle."

He held up a phial of some crimson fluid.

"I suppose there's a quarter-acre of leaf and

bloom and six months' changing weather, not to mention weeks of human toil, in my hand at this moment. Here's dreams for half a dozen poets, and at the bottom of it all is earth—earth and sunlight."

Mrs. Eady said that as a sober housekeeper she would leave bottled poetry to Vivien, and asked the best way to make sloe gin. Stott told her, adding, "There are lots of other drinks you can make without special appliances. I don't know whether you have the usual prejudice against British wines and cordials? It's generally well deserved, and home-made imitations of foreign liqueurs are as a rule pretty dismal drinking. But, after all, I suppose even Benedictine monks didn't get their recipes straight from Heaven."

His gusto was catching, and they went about the place, smelling this, tasting that, until Mrs. Eady reminded Vivien that the afternoon was passing.

"Now you understand why I want a lot of room, Miss Eady," said Stott, as he closed the door behind them.

Vivien said that she supposed he was trying to educate the local farmers.

"Schoolmarm!" he thought, blinking to himself, as he turned the key with a jerk, but he said aloud—

"I'm not in a hurry. It's no good preaching. When I can go down to the village pub, where they sit murmuring over their cups about the low price of broccoli, and plank down a bag of gold out of one pocket and say, 'That's pickled violets,' and another bag of gold out of the other pocket and say, 'and that's blackberries,' then perhaps they'll begin to prick up their ears and ask questions. And quite right, too. They haven't the time or the money or the knowledge to find out fresh things for themselves, and they're too wise to pay much attention to a nice young man from the County Council telling them the proper way to do what they and their fathers and their grandfathers have been doing all their lives. Of course the County Council young man is sometimes right, but as a rule he hasn't sufficiently studied the local conditions—and there's more in local conditions than you'd think. Besides, I think he generally doesn't attach enough importance to the big question, 'Does it pay?'"

The last remark jarred upon Vivien, and she began to talk about ideals. Stott listened patiently, watching her serious face with furtive admiration. He was beginning to understand her a little now, he thought. He believed that in some way, not yet evident, she was violating her instincts, and more than anybody

in the world he pitied a person with a divided nature.

"Yes, that's all right, Miss Eady," he said, when she had finished; "but you've got to begin with the stuff and work out your ideals from that. It's no good applying to human beings ready-made principles thought out in the study away from men and women. Here we are, men and women with needs and appetites and aspirations, and here's the world full of raw material for our development. You can't get either nobility of character or happiness by aiming at them directly, without regard to your own functions and limitations. It's no good sitting down and saying, 'I'm going to be good, or great, or happy, or noble.' These things are by-products of your relation to the universe. Of course there's the other way—the way of renunciation; but I suppose you don't want all the world to go into cloisters?"

Vivien felt quite sure that if Harpur had been there, he could have proved to Stott that his philosophy was all wrong. She was not prepared to argue with him herself, however, so she merely talked vague generalities about materialism and the decline of poetry. Stott looked aggressive, but for some reason, probably because he recognised that her prejudices were too deeply rooted to be combated offhand, he refrained from

speaking. He was always, too, a little afraid of any discussion that involved the betrayal of real personalities. He was very good friends with several women, but probably because he recognised that any more intimate relation would require an inconvenient explanation his manner with them* was a sort of good-humoured bluffing—a keeping them at a distance, not out of egoism, but for purely practical reasons. He would not have married any woman without telling her the truth about Hugh, and so literally he could not afford to marry. Vivien piqued him to a greater sincerity than most women, and because he could not argue with her without giving more of himself and his history than he thought advisable, he said nothing at all.

They were now at the top of the Rosemorran Valley, looking down upon fields and gardens framed in gorse and elder, sleeping in the eye of the westering sun. The continuous murmur of the sea was blown up to them like the distant noise of a great city. The fishing-boats from Trevenen, like a flight of brown butterflies, were beating out westward on the ebb towards the Wolf Lighthouse. They picked their way down among the fields of daffodils, wallflowers, and violets; through strawberry beds and long rows of raspberry canes trained into little arches; between hedges of elder and veronica and escal-

lonia. Stott looked about him with a keen eye, occasionally stopping to speak to one of the men working in the fields.

"Farming, you see," he explained, "is like Sam Weller's swarry, a joint with trimmings. Down here the joint is dairy-farming—beef, butter, and pork, as they say. That means a bare living, but the trimmings are full of possibilities. The nature of the trimmings changes with the conditions of the market. It used to be corn, but I don't suppose any tariff will make corn worth while again. Then came early potatoes, but Jersey and the Continent cut in and spoiled the market, and the same thing is happening with flowers. My idea is to make my joint—my dairy-farm—as good as I can, and experiment with trimmings; bees, broccoli, cheese, poultry, fruit, flowers—anything. I don't claim to be a Heaven-born discoverer. Gladstone saw the principle, but his proposal was too characteristically British and sweeping. Jam: leave all and follow jam. Well, jam is an excellent thing, but unless the whole world changes its feeding habits the British farmer won't get salvation out of the jam-pot alone. Gladstone was on the right track, but he was too arbitrary, too inelastic in his conclusions."

Vivien suspected that Stott had begun farming

as a sort of game, and that afterwards he had seen money in it, and now made a virtue of his natural desire to be successful. She was half attracted, half repelled by his frank materialism, as she called it. Not yet able to understand that the Earth yields her most intimate secrets only to the hardy lover, she thought him insensitive and irreverent. She would not have admitted it in words, but she associated poetry and mystery with darkness, or at least with half light ; with a faltering touch and a fastidious avoidance of the crudities of life. She envied Stott his apparent contentment, but because he did not talk about duty as a separate consideration she concluded that he had no sense of duty.

They crossed the headland and came down upon the cliff path Vivien had traversed on the morning when Stott extricated her from her difficulty with the donkey. She could not deny that the sea come upon suddenly, out of the talk and evidences of everyday life and labour, was more uplifting than when she had deliberately sought it out for meditation. The idea, so contrary to her and her lover's whole philosophy of considered living, was rather disturbing.

CHAPTER V

A TWIST of the path round a shoulder of rock brought them suddenly in sight of the Cove. At once they saw that something out of the ordinary was happening. The tide was out, and on the boulders at the back of the quay stood a little group of red-stained quarrymen, with old Paul Tyacke the crabber in their midst. Paul, his grey beard and wisps of hair bristling, was talking energetically, stamping his feet and pointing out to sea with monkey-like gestures. In curious contrast to the rest of the group, two coastguardsmen in their workmanlike uniform, with gaitered legs, and holding walking-sticks in their hands, stood at ease upon the boulders, as if they had been placed there as sentinels. Berriman, the police sergeant from Porthidnè, was hurrying down the road into the Cove. All through the place there was an air of excitement; children ran towards the quay, while women standing at their cottage doors yelled after them distractedly. The waste heap of

the quarry was lined with men looking down at the group on the boulders.

"Something washed ashore, I expect," said Stott to the ladies. "We don't often get wreckage of any value drifting in here, but whenever it does come there's always a squabble. I expect somebody is disputing Tyacke's claim to have seen it first."

As they drew nearer to the place, an old man in passing touched Stott on the arm, and drawing him aside muttered in his ear. Stott looked grave, and turning to Mrs. Eady said—

"I think you had better go on. It's a body."

The two ladies said good-bye and hurried past the quay, while Stott remained talking to the man who had stopped him.

"A sailor?" he asked.

"No, sir," the man replied, "but a stranger. Nobody seems to have seen him before."

Stott hesitated, with an inexplicable feeling of foreboding. In another moment he would have followed the Eadys, but one of the coast-guards, looking round, saluted him and moved aside, as if inviting him to join the group. Stott climbed down and picked his way over the slippery boulders. The moment he saw the body, he understood the feeling which had warned him not to look; for the man who lay

extended on his back with glazed eyes staring up at the sky was Rutherford Lorraine. It was already too late not to recognise him; for the coastguardsman, who had been watching Stott's face, said eagerly—

“ You know him, sir ? ”

“ Yes, I know him,” said Stott quietly.

The others, even to the policeman who had just sent away two men for planks or a door to carry the body to the inn, huddled up round Stott with new interest as he stood looking down at the body. They were all very white and scared-looking, but they seemed already a little comforted by Stott's recognition of the body. The eternal strangeness and incomprehensibility of Death is perhaps its most terrible aspect; and, for these simple men, that one person among them knew the identity of Death's victim brought the event a little nearer to the realm of the natural. They now seemed less fascinated, and began to stoop and examine the body and to speculate how Lorraine came by his death.

“ He looks like an actor, sir,” said one of the men.

The description was singularly true. Lorraine lay with his right arm across his chest, so that one fat white hand, wearing a ring with a green stone in it, rested on his heart. His other arm was extended by his side, with the palm of the

hand upward, so that he seemed in an attitude of declamation. He wore a grey suit, with a black velvet waistcoat and a red tie. How he had died was not immediately apparent. Except a tiny wound, a mere scratch, above the right eyebrow, there was no visible injury to his body. At least one full tide had covered him since he lay upon the boulders, and the effect of the water had been to shrink his clothes upon him, so that they looked too small, and revealed a grotesque contrast between his bloated body and thin legs. Stiffening, his legs were slightly drawn up, with one foot twisted inward, so that they looked like the nerveless limbs of a paralytic. The long, lank black hair streaked with grey was swept back from the arched white forehead that had promised so much and fulfilled so little. During his life more than one person had said that Lorraine's poetry was an after-thought suggested by his appearance, and that one was as meretricious as the other. Death, wiser and yet more cruel than human critics, had discovered some hidden dignity in Lorraine's features and expression only to burlesque it in his attitude. But for Stott, one character of Lorraine's appearance obscured all others: he was horribly like Hugh.

A breathless new-comer, a young quarryman, stooped, peered, and broke into startled speech.

"Why, I saw him yesterday afternoon. He passed the quarry. He came across the fields from Porthlew. He had a Jim Crow hat and a walking-stick, and he was saying poetry."

"Do you think he was coming to see you, sir?" said the man who had compared Lorraine with an actor.

"I think it is very likely," said Stott, roused from his reverie.

The policeman reproved the questioner by saying—

"Mr. Stott will tell us what he knows at the inquest."

Tyacke the crabber, who with his hands in his pockets had been pacing an endless fisherman's dance—four paces forward, four paces backward—on the boulders, began to cry—

"I was going out 'round quay to look at my lines. I've not had a proper ketch since Chriss-mass; nawthen' but a few gurnet an' tamlin cod. I'd shut a longline auver to Tal-y-maen. Just as I was hoisting the lug I see somethen' on the boulders. 'What's that, then?' I says. 'Tedna dawg, tedna tub, and tedden oreweed.' So I pulled in close, and Aw my dear life! I was 'most skeered to deeth. My dears, I'm gone in. I shall nivver dare pass the plaâce by land or say. Ef he wanted to drownd hisself," he

cried fiercely, "why need he come here? Taken' away a man's bread!"

"'Ssh—I'd be ashamed," said the others in a low chorus.

Stott's brain echoed something of the old man's complaint. Why need Lorraine have come here? Why need he have returned to England at all? Nobody wanted him, and England was cleaner for his absence. Though from the circumstances Stott did not believe that Lorraine had committed suicide, still his death was all of a piece with his life. All his life he had evaded responsibility—had wavered and slid and lied and dodged. He would not definitely describe himself as a poet or as an actor. Even his name was not his own. He had given a pretext for his desertion of his wife: he had not been single-minded even in his adultery, but must complicate lust with cupidity. When his abandoned child had found love and care, he had not even the sense or the grace to stop away, but must pollute the clear course of his son's young life with the shadow of his foul presence. Stott felt sure that Lorraine had come to see him with no manly purpose. If he had come to offer to accept his natural responsibility, Stott would have savagely spurned him; but he would at least in his own mind have given him credit for the offer. Or if he had come

as an enemy, with some foolish melodramatic idea of denouncing the wrong he had affected to believe and perhaps half believed that Stott did him at the time of his flight to America, Stott would have laughed at him, but while kicking him out of the house would still have admitted that he was kicking some sort of a man. But, thought Stott in his bitterness, it was obvious that Lorraine had come neither to expiate nor to denounce—not even frankly to beg. No doubt he intended to hang about in the neighbourhood exposing his destitution, and though not threatening, always by his presence reminding Stott that he could poison the wells of his affection for the boy ; so that Stott would have been driven to give him money to hide himself, as one would pay a beggar to cover up his sores.

Lorraine's death, from the look of his body and the opinion of the men on the spot, had been caused by a clumsy accident. There was nothing to suggest that he had jumped or fallen from a height, such as the quay wall. Apparently he had slipped while walking on the boulders, had struck his head with sufficient force to stun him, and had then been reached and drowned by the rising tide. He must have died in at the most three feet of water. It seemed incredible that a man could lose hold of his life thus without

a fight for it ; one would have thought that however deep his stupor the touch of water would have roused him ; but there was no sign of a struggle either in the expression of his face or the position of his limbs. His death, like his life, was futile and indefinite : water had to complete what a fall had begun.

The mere knowledge that Lorraine was dead would have given Stott nothing but relief. A man like that, the cause of only evil to his fellow-creatures, whose whole life was an indecency, was better out of the world. But it was the manner of his death that was so exasperating, as if he could not even die without tainting the lives of others. Though Stott had nothing to reproach himself with in his past relation with Lorraine, his body brought with it, like an evil odour, to his healthy nature the hint of an old shame—like some foul thing laid on his very doorstep. Perhaps what oppressed him most of all was the ironical reminder in Lorraine's features, now that they were half redeemed by death, so strangely like his son's, of those possibilities of heredity which, in spite of his often expressed contempt for the theory, were always lurking in the background of his love for Hugh. It was as if, while thinking about a rose, one had thrust upon his notice the muck about its roots.

When the two men came sweating down the boulders with an old door for an improvised stretcher, Stott turned away with his heart full of anger. His concern for the living prevented any natural pity he might have felt for the dead. The men had thoughtfully brought an old sheet to cover up the corpse, and this reverent care for the ignoble dead unreasonably disgusted him. It would have been more just, he thought, to huddle the body quickly underground and scrupulously efface all marks of its interment. Each new consideration for the dead was fresh risk of wrong to the living. Stott made no pretence of concealing from himself that he was glad Lorraine was dead. But if only he had died anywhere else, or at least had not seen the boy. Stott was angry with himself, too, for yielding to his curiosity to look at the body. If only he had not seen and recognised Lorraine's face, and in the presence of other people, no questioning, no certainty in his own mind would have induced him to admit the acquaintance. That was the most galling part of the whole thing; it was all so unnecessary; it all might have been so easily prevented.

The policeman joined him as he walked moodily up the road ahead of the little procession. Berri-man was evidently of a mind divided between official reticence and human curiosity to learn

all that he could about the gruesome treasure-trove. Withal he was aggressively cheerful, as one braced by his occupation to meet the larger accidents of life undaunted. His round red face, with its tiny fair moustache, beamed with kindly importance as he apologised almost gaily for the necessity of troubling Stott to appear at the inquest as witness to Lorraine's identity. "It's only a matter of form," he kept reassuring him. He consulted Stott in a choice of terms for filling up his official report to the coroner. "The body of a man" went no further than the truth, but still perhaps "A body" was more agreeable to legal caution. Meanwhile he hoped respectfully but eagerly for some hint of Stott's association with the dead man. Stott listening with half an ear and answering in monosyllables was grimly conscious that the incident would not improve his own reputation in the Cove. Death, which had wiped from Lorraine's face something of its degradation, could not entirely remove the indescribable though indelible signs of a depraved nature; and if it is true that a man is judged by the company he keeps, it is yet more true that in the eye of the world he is never absolved from his friends of the past. It did not strike Stott, as it might have struck a more imaginative or a more selfish man, that if the prurient picking

and questioning of the inquest brought out the whole of Lorraine's squalid history and his own early relations with him and his wife, and his adoption of their child, he might incur a terrible suspicion. Men have been tried for murder on less evidence with no stronger motive apparent. But of himself Stott hardly thought at all: his chief concern was how he might prevent Hugh learning that the man who had called upon him at school was his father. A great deal depended upon the amount of mud Lorraine had stirred up in London and in his progress to Penolver, how many and what witnesses would be called, and what gossip would be revived by the establishment of Lorraine's identity.

As if in response to Stott's thoughts, Berriman said—

"Coroner Treloar is a nice gentleman, and doesn't believe in making unnecessary trouble just to show his own importance, like some do. He's got a beautiful way with juries, and they'll say whatever he tells them in reason. If there's the least chance of bringing it in accidental death and no blame attached to anybody, he'll do it. And quite right, too, in my opinion," said the policeman, with an airy flick of his gloves, as one admitting the humanity of the law. "When a man's dead he's dead,

and there's an end of him, that's what I say ; but the living have to go on. If a man has private reasons for doing away with himself," he continued, tilting his helmet to scratch his close-cropped fair head, "well, it's against the law, as everybody knows ; but where's the use of saddling his relations and friends with the disgrace of a verdict of suicide, and perhaps doing the widow out of the insurance ? "

Stott refused to be drawn, however, and merely said that he entirely agreed with the policeman. To add yet another vexation to the afternoon's business, Stott saw Mr. Marlow, the vicar of St. Adrian, coming down the road. The hostility between the two men was evident in Mr. Marlow's effusive "Ah, how d'you do, Stott ? " as he extended a mittened hand, and in Stott's curt reply. Mr. Marlow was a small, querulous-looking man, with dull, prominent eyes, a pointed beard, large ears, and a very thin neck. Under his manner of great meekness there was a hint of mulish obstinacy. Sergeant Berriman gave him a casual salute, as if the occasion reversed their ordinary relations.

"I went to call on Mrs. Eady, but she was out," Mr. Marlow began on a note of grievance. "However, I met her and her daughter coming home, so I introduced myself, and Mrs. Eady told me that a body had been washed ashore in

the Cove and that you were down here. What's it all about? I never saw such a place: something unpleasant is sure to happen whenever I come to Penolver."

Stott told him shortly. The tone of his voice made Mr. Marlow look at him curiously. He waited behind until the quarrymen had set down their burden for a rest, and then he gingerly lifted the sheet with which they had decently covered the face of the corpse. Stott walked on with the policeman, who expressed his opinion of Mr. Marlow by picking a stem of grass and chewing it. Stott heard Mr. Marlow ask a question or two and the quarrymen's curt replies, and then Mr. Marlow came hurrying after him.

"I say, Stott," he said complainingly, as soon as he came up, "you never told me it was a friend of yours. How very disagreeable! How did it happen? I'm most awfully sorry for you, my dear fellow. It will be a dreadful nuisance to you. Of course you'll have to give evidence at the inquest and all that. How did he come to do it? Was he stopping with you?"

His manner was subtly compassionate, less that Stott should have lost his friend than that he should have had such a friend. Behind his commiseration was a sly satisfaction, as if he had received a new and corroborative light on his idea of Stott's history.

Stott answered such of his questions as he thought fit, and Mr. Marlow continued—

“Not an old man, by any means. The face seems familiar to me somehow. Have I ever seen him before?”

“No, I don’t think so,” said Stott.

Mr. Marlow’s tone implied an aggrieved “Why not?” as he went on—

“It’s rather a striking face, too. He looks like an artist of some sort, with that waistcoat and tie. I should say he had seen better days.”

For once Stott was devoutly thankful for Mr. Marlow’s shallow and discursive brain. The remark that Lorraine’s face looked familiar gave him a fresh pang, and he wondered whether any among the bearers was more perceptive than Mr. Marlow. When they reached the little inn, the policeman touched his helmet, and remained to direct the disposal of the body. For a hundred yards or so, Stott was compelled to bear with Mr. Marlow’s company.

“A friend of your journalistic days, I suppose?” he asked. “Well, he looks like a man who has led an irregular life. Do you think he committed suicide?”

“It’s impossible to say,” said Stott wearily. “But I don’t think a man would come all the way from London to Cornwall to commit suicide.”

“ Well,” said Mr. Marlow, when they came to the turning, “ I promised Mrs. Eady I would look in and tell her exactly what has happened. She’ll be shocked to hear it is a friend of yours ” ; and he went away in a state of comparative cheerfulness.

CHAPTER VI

AT the inquest on Rutherford Lorraine, Mr. Coroner Treloar quite justified Sergeant Berri-man's opinion of his common sense. He accepted Stott's evidence of Lorraine's identity and circumstances without asking for another witness on those points. "We all know Mr. Stott," said Mr. Treloar, and that satisfied the jury. Only once during Treloar's courteous questioning did Stott hesitate, and that was when he was asked if Lorraine had any relations. Just for a moment, as he glanced down the long table at the serious, kindly faces of the jurymen, the impulse came into his mind, "Trust to their decency to hold their tongues, and tell them about the boy." But, recalling a phrase out of Hugh's letter, all his nature revolted "from the risk, and he said, "No." The other evidence fitted in so exactly with Stott's that the rest of the inquiry was plain sailing. Lorraine had spent one night at an hotel at Porthlew, where he was quite the hero of the taproom. The

landlord, who gave his evidence with a sort of sullen perplexity, as if he expected to be laughed at, but didn't know what for, had been corrected by his late guest for not knowing his luck. He begged leave to apologise now to Mr. Treloar and to Mr. Stott : books, and particularly poetry books, didn't often come his way. The gentleman had said that he was Rutherford Lorraine : did he mean to say that he had never heard of Rutherford Lorraine? Upon that, the gentleman had fetched down his bag and handed round a book of poems, also some newspaper cuttings about them. By the way, might he remind the coroner that Mr. Lorraine hadn't paid his bill? From what he had noticed just now, when Sergeant Berriman turned the contents of Mr. Lorraine's bag and pockets out on the table, they seemed to be principally pawn tickets, and he couldn't afford—well, Mr. Stott, as everybody knew, was a gentleman. Mr. Lorraine had said so : he had spoken of him with tears in his eyes. He had come all the way from America, he said, to shake Mr. Stott by the hand again. Did Mr. Lorraine behave like a man about to commit suicide? Certainly not : he was in the best of spirits, and spoke about the pot of money he was going to make out of a new book of poems. Three people in the bar had been promised copies of the book,

but of course Mr. Treloar would understand that he, the landlord, couldn't be held responsible for that. Altogether, Mr. Lorraine had meant pretty good business for him that evening, eh? Well, he wasn't going to deny that; and drawing his hand across his mouth the landlord sat down, while the jurymen nudged each other. He half rose again for a second to beg pardon and ask if he might keep Mr. Lorraine's bag as a curiosity to show to visitors.

Beyond Lorraine's temporary poverty there seemed to have been no motive for suicide, and the doctor's evidence agreed with that of the men who first handled the body, that death was accidental. Lorraine's hat and stick had been found wedged in among the boulders. Apparently he had been drowned while in a state of insensibility, but whether he had slipped and stunned himself, or whether he had suddenly fainted, the doctor could not say. The latter was not unlikely: all his organs were more or less unhealthy, and showed the influence of chronic alcoholism. It was almost certain that he had not jumped or fallen from a height, while the condition of the lungs showed that breathing was embarrassed before he began to drown. Quite a little lecture Dr. Pascoe gave them. Coroner Treloar vindicated his reputation for humour in his examination of Tyacke,

who wanted compensation for moral and intellectual damages. Mr. Treloar drew him out until they roared with laughter, none louder than Sergeant Berriman. Before they broke up, Mr. Treloar complimented Stott on his humanity in undertaking the expenses of the funeral.

Stott did not feel quite easy in his mind until he had followed the newspapers for the next few days. He spent an hour in the Porthlew Free Library, only to receive a melancholy intimation of the transitoriness of literary fame. Here and there in the country news columns of London daily newspapers he came across three-line allusions to the discovery of the body of "Rutherford Lorraine, described as an author," in various places along the Cornish coast. One paper only commented on the singularity of the accident from a medico-legal point of view

So far as Stott's chief anxiety was concerned, then, the result of the inquest was entirely satisfactory. He himself came out of the affair slightly damaged in his local reputation. He was liked well enough in Penolver, but his way of living and his reputed opinions were open to criticism. He went neither to church nor to chapel, and he occasionally drank a glass of beer at the inn. At one time he had written

for the newspapers, and he had friends among the Trevenen painters—a queer lot at best. Apparently his past friends had been queerer. Perhaps the fact that made the deepest impression was Lorraine's inability to pay his hotel bill if he had lived. After market day, when Penolver had an opportunity to compare notes with Porthlew, more came out. At the inquest nobody had cared to prejudice the license of a respectable publican by asking inconvenient questions, but there was no doubt about it that Lorraine had been beastly drunk that evening. That, however, did not excuse the stories he had told or his light speaking of religion and morality. Some of the poems he had read aloud were nothing but a scandal. Apparently he had loved Stott like a brother. Well, well, birds of a feather. And lastly, joking apart, it was hard lines on Paul Tyacke. Nobody was superstitious, but crabbing was a lonely job, and—— Well, it was a pity Mr. Stott's friend hadn't been found a little farther along the coast, instead of bang up against the quay wall.

Some of all this came to the Eadys through Janie, and at least upon Vivien's mind left a disagreeable impression. She did not like her friends to be associated with public-houses, dead bodies, and inquests. The discovery of the body had been made while she and her

mother were actually in Stott's company, and she felt unreasonably that he ought not to expose ladies to such accidents. When Mr. Marlow called at the cottage after leaving Stott he described Lorraine as a great friend of Stott's, and intimated that he had fallen over the cliff while he was drunk. The inquest had disproved that, of course ; Lorraine obviously hadn't fallen over the cliff at all ; but still Vivien's mind retained the picture of a drunken man chanting dissolute songs as he reeled along the cliff path on his way to revisit the friend and boon companion of his youth. Anyhow, he had been drunk the night before. Lorraine, in short, was the sort of person one might expect to meet at Stott's house.

So Vivien Eady re-read her lover's letter with an unwilling concession to his bright wisdom. "Cultivated men who shun civilisation have nearly always a reason which reflects unfavourably upon their character." That seemed to be true. She felt that she had been a little hasty in judging Selwyn, but the recognition that he was apparently justified in warning her on a question of good taste, and that he might say, "I told you so," made her a little angry with him as well as with herself. The latter chiefly because at the bottom of her heart she knew that it was disappointment in Stott

that she felt ; and disappointment meant that against her reason she had been prepared to like him. She was not yet of an experience to know that in matters of liking, instinct, and not reason, is the only safe guide. When she wrote to Selwyn again she did not refer to either Stott or the inquest, nor did she discuss them with her mother, except on the unavoidable occasions when the subjects were mentioned in their presence.

When with her mother she met Stott on the road leading down into the Cove she was just a trifle stiff in her manner. Not so little but that he perceived it. The touch of the Ishmaelite in his nature made him perhaps on the look-out for snubbing, and, ordinarily indifferent to other people's opinions, he felt sore. If Stott had stopped to think, he would have known that he minded what Vivien Eady thought of him because his own vexation and anxiety about the inquest were consequent upon a weakness, a want of courage in his nature, which prided itself on fearlessly facing life at all points and in all emergencies. He liked to think of himself as four-square and well-bottomed : that was his little vanity. It struck him now, for no reason that he could think of except the look of her, that Vivien Eady was worthy of his confidence ; that in allowing her to misunderstand him he was doing her rather than himself

an injustice. As they walked along to the bottom of the lane leading up to the farm an ungovernable instinct kept telling him, "She's all right; she wouldn't tell the boy."

Mrs. Eady, who fancied that she understood Vivien's difficulty—a girlish, delicate, though quite unreasonable shrinking from a person lately associated with something squalid—took her own blunt way of showing her sympathy with Stott.

"I'm so glad this bothersome business is all over," she said, holding out her hand to say good-bye. "I quite agree with Tyacke that it's most inconsiderate of people to die on one's doorstep."

Stott laughed as he raised his cap. "Anyhow," he thought, as he breasted the slope, "Hugh's coming home in a fortnight."

When the Eadys reached home, Janie, grinning all over her face, gave Vivien a letter which she had been holding in a fold of her apron between her finger and thumb. Vivien opened her letter, and cried out—

"Oh, mother, Selwyn's coming down at Easter!"

To tell the truth, there was more surprise than gladness in her exclamation, though she immediately went on to say how glad she was. But Mrs. Eady wondered. Vivien sat down, and went on reading her letter. To be

quite precise, the feeling uppermost in her mind was fright. That morning's desertion of Novalis to make a rhubarb tart had been the first step in what Vivien decided was a grave neglect of duty. She had now been at Penolver six weeks, quite long enough to settle down, but she had not yet seriously resumed what she and Selwyn called her higher interests. She had worked in a desultory way out of doors at her German, but she had not read a word of Greek, and she had merely dipped into the parcel of books her lover sent her. There was just the touch of the school-master in Selwyn she dreaded. He would be quite justified in taking her to task. The time had passed very quickly, and, as Vivien now recognised, she had been enjoying herself tremendously. They had made the acquaintance of some of the Trevenen painters, and there had been calls to repay and studios to visit. Of course she was delighted that Selwyn was coming down, but she wished that he hadn't sprung the news upon her quite so suddenly. As an afterthought, she would have preferred him to wait until the unpleasant gossip about the inquest had blown over.

Mrs. Eady blinked wisely while Vivien read out scraps of her letter. She was thinking that it would be interesting to see how Selwyn Harpur and Humphrey Stott got on together.

During the afternoon, when they sat in the quarry, Vivien working furiously at Novalis and her mother darning stockings, Mrs. Eady ventured to say—

“It will be pleasant for Selwyn to have another man down here.”

“I shouldn’t think he and Mr. Stott would have much in common,” said Vivien, looking up from her book.

“Perhaps not,” said Mrs. Eady, biting her worsted, while her daughter shivered; “but it’s rather an advantage sometimes to meet fresh minds.”

“Here are the scissors, mother,” said Vivien. “Still,” she continued, tapping the book with her pencil, “one must have some common ground of interest.”

For the life of her, Mrs. Eady could not have said why it came into her head at that moment, but she nearly said—

“Well, there’s you.”

In the recoil, she came out with the platitude—

“Well—they’re both Oxford men.”

“Mother,” said Vivien, with a laugh, “you’re delightfully fresh. You remind me of the man who asked the returned traveller if he knew his brother Jack in Australia. However, I don’t see why the fact of Selwyn having been at Oxford should make him interested in pigs, or pickled

onions, or whatever it is that Mr. Stott hopes to regenerate the world by."

"Perhaps I should have put it the other way," said Mrs. Eady purringly. "It will be pleasant for Mr. Stott to have Selwyn here."

"Mr. Stott is independent of his fellow-creatures," said Vivien, looking rather more interested.

"I shouldn't describe him as misanthropical."

"No, perhaps not," admitted Vivien, "but he has a peculiar taste in friends."

"You know, I think you're perhaps a little unfair, Vivien," said Mrs. Eady, after a pause. "I'm inclined to believe that poor Mr. Lorraine wasn't exactly a friend of Mr. Stott's own choosing."

"Then he should be more careful of the company he keeps," said Vivien, with some heat.

"Did it never strike you that a man who lives his life to the full in the world runs greater risks of making undesirable acquaintances than one who limits himself by a counsel of perfection?"

"Oh, I know you think Selwyn rather priggish," said Vivien, colouring a little, as she opened her book again.

"No, I don't," said Mrs. Eady stoutly. "The proof of the pud—I mean it remains to be seen. Personally, I believe they will get on very well together."

"The little cat!" she thought affectionately to herself, glancing slyly at Vivien's purely cut profile bent over her book. "She's mentioned him in a letter and got snubbed. Well, we shall have stirring times."

That afternoon Mr. Marlow, this time accompanied by his wife, paid his frustrated call. Mrs. Eady humorously recognised that, the first time he had been sent alone to see if they were proper persons to know. Mrs. Marlow was a tall, bony-faced woman, wearing her faded good looks rather timidly. She looked as if she were always reassuring herself with the knowledge that, come what would, she was the granddaughter of a peer. Both she and her husband had the habit of exchanging confidences of the eye when in company.

To-day they began at once to talk about the inquest.

"Sentimentality," said Mr. Marlow, "is the curse of our age. Nobody seems to have the courage to face facts and speak out his convictions."

"I expect," said his wife, "that Mr. Treloar wanted to spare Mr. Stott the unpleasantness of being a friend to a person that committed suicide."

"Facts," said Mr. Marlow, "are not altered by evasion."

"Not when you explain it so clearly as that, dear," admitted his wife, with a little timid smile

at Mrs. Eady; "but, as you know, I am not intellectual."

"If," continued Mr. Marlow, "my wife committed suicide, I should not attempt to conceal it."

"Oh, Gus, how very disagreeable!"

"It would be my duty, dear," he said, reassuring her with an affectionate smile.

"Well, I like Mr. Stott," said Mrs. Marlow, with the defiance of a dove, "and he comes of a very good family, the Norfolk Stotts. Farming is one of the things a gentleman may do. Anything to do with the land is so superior; don't you think so, Mrs. Eady?"

"I think Mr. Stott is very interesting," said Mrs. Eady.

"Interesting, perhaps," admitted Mr. Marlow, "but shallow. I have heard him say that there is no moral principle which condemns alcohol that does not also include tea and coffee. That, of course, is absurd: men do not beat their wives after drinking tea or coffee. I have proved it. Tea and coffee do not excite me, but if I drank a glass of whisky I might do anything."

"Oh, Gus, I hope you won't!" exclaimed his wife, turning pale.

"How long has Mrs. Stott been dead?" asked Mrs. Eady.

"Nobody knows," answered Mrs. Marlow interestedly. "He never mentions her, so I

don't think she can have been a lady. That, I expect, was the Tragedy of his life. It must be so dreadful for a man like that not to marry a lady. But the boy is a darling," she added impulsively ; afterwards blushing as she caught her husband's eye reproving the fond expression. The Marlows, it may be mentioned, had no children. As if to recover her composure and in a slightly uneven voice, Mrs. Marlow went on to say what a difficulty her husband found in meeting intellectual society.

"There is nobody here he can really talk to," she said, as if alluding to an unfortunate complaint of his ; "that is the worst of being in the Church. As my husband says, it so often means intellectual banishment. 'To herd with narrow foreheads,' don't you know. I forget the rest," she added apologetically ; "I am not intellectual."

"It is not so hard for me as it is for you, dear," said Mr. Marlow, with an affectionate glance at her. "I have my work. I'm afraid, Mrs. Eady," he continued discouragingly, "you will not find much congenial society down here. Of course there are ourselves and the Trehernes of Botrea, and perhaps Dr. Pascoe and his wife, and then there are the Trevenne artists."

* He went over the names as a man might tell another of the shooting prospects. Mrs. Eady

said that they had already made the acquaintance of some of the Trevenen painters. Mr. Marlow looked slightly injured.

"Oh, indeed," he said coldly; continuing, "The painters here don't take their art seriously enough. I cannot believe that men who live such worldly lives can create great pictures. They have no ideals."

"And their wives dress so badly," put in Mrs. Marlow.

"The common people here are not attractive," went on Mr. Marlow, frowning a little at his wife's levity. "They are not truthful; they will say anything to please you—as witness the inquest. They are unreliable as workmen, they are rude and independent, and their religion is almost entirely emotional. I have in an extraordinary degree the power of adapting myself to all sorts and conditions of men, and yet they regard me with suspicion as a foreigner. I came here from a curacy in Buckinghamshire, where my vicar was an Honourable and brother to the lord of the manor." Here Mrs. Marlow blushed and cast down her eyes. "In fact," continued Mr. Marlow, "the church was practically on the lawn of the manor. It was a great change, I assure you. And I had the offer of a living at Forest Hill, but my wife is so romantic."

"Well, Gus, I couldn't live in a suburb, could

"I? You see," she explained pathetically, "I am not at all intellectual."

Mr. Marlow drank his tea critically, and ate a great many pieces of toast. He asked Vivien if she were musical, and said that he used to play the double-bass in a string quintet, but that he had not touched the instrument for years.

"One grows rusty in exile," he said. All the time his dull eyes were wandering about the room. Presently they lighted up.

"Why, surely," he said, pointing with a piece of toast to a photograph on the mantelshelf, "that is Selwyn Harpur!"

"Yes; do you know him?" said Vivien in an unflatteringly surprised tone.

"No; but I have seen his photograph at my sister's house," he replied.

"Gus's sister raves about Selwyn Harpur," explained Mrs. Marlow; adding, in a lower tone, "She is intellectual."

"My sister married Fleming, a Fellow of Oriel," said Mr. Marlow; "she is now a widow."

"Oh yes, I have heard Mr. Harpur speak of her," said Vivien rather coldly. "She lives somewhere in Devonshire, doesn't she?"

"She has also a flat in town," said Mrs. Marlow impressively.

Vivien was not in the least jealous of Mrs. Fleming, whom she had never seen, but it seemed

to her a slight on Selwyn that he could be appreciated by a relation of Mr. Marlow's. People like that could only admire his defects. She was beginning to understand that the reason why she disliked Mr. Marlow was because he reminded her of something Selwyn narrowly escaped. The friendship between Selwyn and Mrs. Fleming explained Mr. Marlow, she thought.

The discovery of the acquaintance, however, seemed to brighten Mr. Marlow up. He was delighted to hear that Selwyn was coming to Penolver, and promised the Eadys that he would make him feel at home. As if any other subject would be an anticlimax, almost immediately afterwards the Marlows took their leave.

"Well?" said Mrs. Marlow, taking her husband's arm.

"Well?" said he, giving hers a little squeeze.

"I think we shall like them," she said. "Mrs. Eady is a lady, and I feel quite sure that Miss Eady is intellectual."

"H'm, yes," he admitted, frowning a little, "but shallow."

CHAPTER VII

THE down train, which was supposed to reach Porthlew at half-past six, was a little late. Stott walked up and down the platform with his doubled-up fists thrust deep into the pockets of his overcoat, pulling hard at his pipe to control his excitement. With his passion for doing, he was at any time a bad waiter. The prospect of seeing Hugh again, always a new delight, was now intensified by the events of the last month. It was like a recovery from danger. Stott's reason told him that nothing had changed between him and the boy, but he could not get rid of the feeling that they must look upon each other with new eyes. Like a lover who has dreamed a change in his mistress's affections, he craved the reassurance of looks and words. During the last week or so, impatience with the ambiguous situation had made him dally with the idea of telling Hugh the truth, and so making the future secure at whatever cost to the present. Then, in his own phrase, he would be able to "say damn

to everybody." But now, when all his nature was turned to expectancy, he put the idea aside like an infidelity. Hugh was coming home, and he was not going to spoil this holiday.

The sense of waiting was heightened by his having the whole station to himself. The cold, dusky-lit, hollow space echoed to his footsteps like a place of the dead. The only touch of warm light and colour was at the bookstall on the opposite platform, where the clerk sat reading in his little office. Hugh was the sole reason for the train coming to Porthlew: for him the platform had been swept and watered, and the points of gas lighted here and there. A bell purred somewhere along the line, and with a rattle a red signal changed to white against the pale evening sky. The bookstall clerk came out of his office, yawned, and looked up at the clock. A porter appeared from a black doorway, slowly dragging a truck, and turning up the lights as he passed them. A newspaper boy, his shrill whistle awakening echoes in the roof, clattered down the stairs. The rails hummed, a violet cloud of steam bellied from the cutting, and the train ran into the station.

A thin, bullet-headed, brown-eyed little boy, agile as a monkey, leaped from a carriage and into Stott's arms. Stott, laughing almost

hysterically, gripped him hard by the shoulders and held him away.

"Oh, it's good to see you, Hugh," he said; and the boy, released, doubled up his fists and squared up to him, his brown eyes dancing with mischief.

Behind Hugh a tall, grave-looking man with a light moustache got out of the train and put his bag down on the platform. Hugh turned round, blushing.

"Oh, pater, I forgot," he said shyly. "This is Mr. Harpur. He's going out to Penolver to-night to stop at Mrs. Prowse's, and I said we'd be delighted to drive him. The cabs rush you such a lot, don't they?"

Stott held out his hand, and recognising a want of cordiality in the touch of Harpur's, he said—

"You'll not disappoint Hugh?"

"I say, it's extremely good of you," said Harpur, hesitating, "but really—thanks very much."

Stott thought none the worse of him for accepting the offer only out of civility to Hugh.

"I've got a case of books in the van which I must get stowed away," said Harpur.

Stott nodded, and turning away walked up the platform with his hand on Hugh's shoulder. He remembered now that the Eadys had told him that Harpur was coming down to-day, but it had

never occurred to him that he would probably travel by the same train as Hugh. Harpur he had only re-created from his photograph and Vivien Eady's allusions, and though he recognised ~~in her~~ the influence of a somewhat cold and precise personality, he was a little puzzled to account for the stiffness of his manner, particularly since he seemed to have made friends with Hugh. Hugh, indeed, was even now talking enthusiastically about Harpur.

"He's a ripping sort," he said. "I tumbled into his carriage at Exeter, and he spotted my colours and began to talk about schools and things. So I told him my name and all about you, and he said 'Oh,' and didn't seem over-bucked. I asked him if he knew you, and he said 'No,' but I think he must have heard about you, and wouldn't let on. He was rather stiff for a bit after that, but he soon cheered up, and he told me that he was a pup-driver himself—and, I say, pater, he batted for his College."

Stott was intensely amused. He could see exactly how Harpur had been tricked by his interest in boys into an acquaintance he thought undesirable. Probably Harpur disapproved of himself from information derived from Vivien Eady. Stott's only personal regret was that Harpur's company would rob him of that pleasant first hour of confidences with Hugh.

Harpur, who seemed to have recovered from his discomfiture immediately, came out of the left-luggage office smiling. His eyes were a trifle near-set, but otherwise he was an attractive-looking man of about thirty-five, well set up and athletic.

"You know my friends the Eadys, I think?" he said pleasantly, as he came up. "You must help Hugh not to despise Miss Eady for not playing cricket. I'm not going to tell Miss Eady what he said about her age. Apparently he has been deceived: he thought she was quite a girl. However, I think we may venture to say that she is sporting; don't you?"

"Quite," said Stott. "Miss Eady is reckoning on you to teach her trout-fishing, Hugh. I got your license as I came in."

Harpur began to talk about flies with so much particularity that Stott doubted his practical knowledge of trout-fishing.

Outside the station, among the cabs, a boy held the head of a spirited-looking horse in a Ralli car with rubber tyres.

"Didn't you bring Henry?" asked Hugh rather disappointedly, after glancing at the strange boy.

"No; I came in alone," said Stott, who was busy letting down the back of the cart. He had intentionally arranged that he and Hugh should not have a companion on their drive home, and

for a special reason, but he could not help appreciating the humour of the situation—the two antipathetic men unwillingly brought together by the boy's innocent courtesy.

-Harpur took his place beside Stott, and Hugh climbed up behind. They drove past the harbour and along the promenade, through a tearing traffic of fish-carts. It was late dusk, with a sky and sea of wonderfully clear colour. Away to the south the Lizard light flashed like summer lightning, and ahead of them the houses of Trevenen looked cold and blue against the purple headland barring an apricot sky. Hugh, with his arm hooked over the back of the seat, eagerly pointed out places to Harpur.

“That's Trevenen, where the artists live—you can just see the studios among the trees. Porthidnè's round the point with the little island. That's the place the Spaniards raided in fifteen something. There was an old sportsman named Penaluna who turned out to meet them, but he got killed, and his people were beaten back up the hill to the church. The Spaniards burnt the village and the church, all but the tower. You can see the tower there, on the top of the hill. Penolver's a little farther on round the coast, but we can't drive that way, because there's no road, and so we have to climb up that steep hill right ahead.”

Harpur did his best to seem interested ; but, as Stott perceived, his mind was at work considering how he might avoid improving the acquaintance so incautiously begun.

At the foot of the long steep hill beyond Trevenen bridge Hugh jumped down, and with his hands in his overcoat pockets walked beside the horse, glancing at its legs with the eye of an expert.

"How's Kitty coming on ? " he asked.

"She's turning out quite well," said Stott. "I'm thinking of letting her run in Adrian Races."

"How ripping ! " cried Hugh. "Who'll ride her ? "

"Oh, I don't know," said Stott, looking down at him with a laugh. "Henry, I suppose."

"But Henry's such a funk," protested Hugh.

"Well, we'll see," said Stott.

Hugh did not speak again until they reached the top of the hill. Stott pulled up while he climbed into the cart again and settled himself down.

"I say, pater," he asked suddenly, "did you ever hear any more about that chap, Rutherford Lorraine ? "

Stott whipped up the horse, so that they lurched in their seats. Harpur looked round in surprise : he had felt Stott start before he touched the whip.

"Steady, you fool!" said Stott; "there's nothing to shy at."

Nor was there; nor, thought Harpur, had the horse shied.

"Didn't I tell you?" said Stott quietly, as he put back the whip into the socket. "A very sad thing happened. Mr. Lorraine was on his way to see me—or, at least I suppose so—and he must have missed his footing on the boulders and stunned himself in falling. Before anybody found him, he was drowned."

"Oh, poor *chap*!" cried Hugh in deep concern. "I say, I *am* sorry I called him a sweep. The fellows at school will be dreadfully shocked to hear about it: they made such sport of him. And so you never saw him after all, pater?"

"Not alive," said Stott, "though of course I had to go to the inquest to give evidence."

He was unspeakably annoyed. His chief reason for arranging to drive home alone with Hugh had been to anticipate a surprise question like this. He had not mentioned the inquest in writing to Hugh, but had afterwards foreseen the likelihood of Hugh's alluding to Lotraine's visit to Gamages, possibly in the presence of other people.

Harpur was puzzled and vexed for a different reason. Vivien had given him in her letters a rather minute account of daily events in the

small world of Penolver Cove, but she had said nothing about an inquest. He wondered why? His instinctive dislike of Stott took a deeper tinge, and in spite of his friendly feeling towards the boy he more than ever regretted that he had forced him into this acquaintance.

Both men were a little drawn into themselves, and afterwards they spoke with careful words and long pauses between them. Hugh, sensitive to the strained atmosphere and quick enough to see that he had said the wrong thing, felt uncomfortable. Presently he pulled Stott's coat. Stott put his hand behind him and reassuringly squeezed the boy's. Harpur observed the action, and moved impatiently.

"A maudlin sentimentalist," he thought.

After a time, Hugh, as if to fill up the breach, began to ask questions about his friends at Penolver. Mrs. Marlow seemed to be a special favourite. Harpur learned by inference that her husband was a parson, and the name and the cloth together touched some chain of association in his mind. Marlow? Marlow? Oh yes—Mrs. Fleming was a Miss Marlow, and she had a brother, a parson, in Cornwall.

A question to Stott established his identity. That was useful. Mrs. Fleming, he believed, sometimes visited her brother, and she would be sure to know all about Stott. He knew that.

Mrs. Fleming would be flattered to hear from him and glad to do him any little service. He wondered how Elsie Fleming was getting on : he had not seen her for a very long time. He was rather sorry, now, that he had not broken the journey at Exeter and run out to pay her a call. He had never been in the least in love with Elsie Fleming, she was too morbid, too uncertain-tempered ; but she was a remarkable woman, very stimulating, and quite an artist in appreciation. She understood him in a way that Vivien Eady never could, though he loved Vivien Eady and did not love Elsie Fleming. Poor Elsie Fleming ! She was unhappy by temperament, he knew, but he sometimes wondered whether she had not cared for him a little. With a woman of her queer character, there was no saying. If he had gone to see Elsie Fleming he would have escaped the encounter with young Stott with its embarrassing consequences ; though then, indeed, he would have missed the odd little incident when the boy spoke of—what was the name ? Ah yes, Lorraine—Rutherford Lorraine. He must remember that. The colder air of the high land over which they were whirling made him drowsy. For some time nobody spoke.

At last the road dipped among trees, and they went zigzagging down the many turns of a long

hill. Here and there a light showed among the trees, and Harpur heard the rushing of water. Quite sufficiently human to feel thrilled at his approach to the place where his future wife was living, he roused himself.

"Yes," said Stott, in answer to his question, "this is Penolver. Shall I put you down where Mrs. Eady is staying?"

"Does Mrs. Prowse live near there?" asked Harpur, after a moment's hesitation.

"No; a little farther on—on the other side of the valley," said Stott. "Where you can see that big light."

"Well—if it won't be taking you out of your way?"

"Oh, by no means," said Stott; "we have to pass the boarding-house almost."

He controlled an impulse to laugh outright. If he were on his way to see the girl he loved, he thought, however tired and travel-stained he might be, he could not have passed the house where she was living. At first the idea of Harpur's preciseness merely amused him, but as the horse picked its way carefully down the hill his thoughts took a different turn. Mingled with his amusement was a sort of envy. It was very good for a man to be coming after a long journey to the woman he loved waiting by lamplight in a cottage by the sea. Such a

woman as Vivien Eady, with wide brows and brooding eyes, and the touch of soothing in her long, white hands.

Hugh wriggled as if plaintively, and Stott, feeling oddly that his thoughts were disloyal to him, whipped up the horse. They ran smoothly across the bridge and up the ascent on the other side.

At the corner of the Rosemorran Lane another track led up to the boarding-house. A dark figure detached itself from a group of three leaning against the wall and came forward.

"Are you looking out for Mr. Harpur, John?" called Stott.

"Why, yes, Mr. Stott," said the boarding-house keeper in surprise, for he had expected his visitor by a different vehicle. Harpur got down, and Hugh jumped out to pull his kit bag from under the seat.

"Well, good-night," said Harpur, holding out his hand to Stott, "and many thanks." There was more than a touch of finality in his tone. "We must get some fishing together," he said to Hugh, with a little embarrassed laugh. John Prowse shouldered his bag, and they walked on up to the boarding-house.

Hugh climbed up beside Stott and screwed his shoulder into his ribs.

"That all right?" said Stott.

"Topping," said Hugh, with a deep breath of satisfaction.

"I say, pater," he asked presently, "didn't I do right to ask Mr. Harpur to drive out with us?"

"Why, yes, my dear chap," answered Stott; "it was only civil."

"Because I thought afterwards you might not like. You and he didn't seem to hit it off quite."

"I expect Mr. Harpur was a bit tired, you know," said Stott; and Hugh seemed satisfied.

In a few minutes they had reached the farm. Henry ran out of the townplace with a lantern and followed them round to the door of the house. Mrs. Ford, backed by a warm glow, was already standing in the doorway.

"Hullo, Mrs. Ford!" cried Hugh.

He put up his face to be kissed as he entered the house. Stott followed, and dragged him into the dining-room.

"Let's look at you, you young imp," he said, with a nervous laugh.

"Well, will I do?" asked Hugh cheekily, after the inspection.

"When you've had some supper," retorted Stott. "Look alive, and get your coat off."

Hugh ran whistling upstairs. Stott remained for a few minutes in the dining-room, with his hat on and his hands in his pockets. His vexa-

tion at Hugh's reference to Lorraine had passed. On the whole, it was just as well that the little difficulty had been got over in that casual way. The idea of seeming to caution the boy against speaking had been distasteful to him, and he was rather glad now that he had been spared the necessity.

"Damn Harpur!" he said, as he began to take off his overcoat.

When they were at supper, Hugh said—

"I say, pater, is Mr. Harpur sort of engaged to Miss Eady?"

"Yes, I believe so," said Stott, feeling a curious reluctance to make the admission. "Why?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Hugh, with a shrug. "I like him, and all that; but I suppose he'll be always wanting her to spoon, instead of letting her fish, and things. People who are engaged are a nuisance. Rousby has a sister who is engaged, and he says it's simply sickening, and she used to be quite a sportsman."

"Well," said Stott, "you can't expect to have a monopoly of Miss Eady."

"No, I don't mean that," admitted Hugh; "but I think it's an awful mistake not to let a girl do what she likes. Rousby says girls always do what you tell them, but they remember and are sure to round on you some day for interfering with their amusements."

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN, after making his toilet, Selwyn Harpur knocked at the door of the cottage, Vivien got up from her chair with a fine air of indifference.

"I suppose that's Selwyn," she said, glancing once more at her book before she put it down on the table already laid for supper.

"Oh, they ain't human nowadays," thought Mrs. Eady, viciously kicking her footstool. She had taken the trouble to give particular orders to Janie, who, ready conspirator, now began to sing loudly in the kitchen. But, indeed, Mrs. Eady did her daughter an injustice. It was fear, and not coldness or affectation, which made her seem indifferent to her lover's nearness.

Vivien received and returned her lover's grave salutation with mingled feelings. She loved him, but with him she willingly would have foregone all that side of love which had to do with kissing. He belonged to a higher plane. Yet, under circumstances, she would like to be kissed. Her imagination did not go quite so far as to conceive

one man making love to her on paper and another of less account in proper person as a satisfactory arrangement, but it was something like that.

They entered the sitting-room, Vivien a little flushed, but haughty in face of her mother's involuntarily arch expression.

"Well, Selwyn," said Mrs. Eady, rising to meet him.

Selwyn had perfect manners; and, looking at him now as he greeted her familiarly yet with the deference due to her, she admitted that Vivien was to be commended for her choice of a husband. He was very handsome and distinguished-looking in evening dress.

"How did you get out here?" asked Vivien in the matter-of-fact tone of one the least bit self-conscious. "We haven't heard anything drive past except Mr. Stott's dogcart."

There was a momentary change in the expression of Harpur's eyes, and Vivien continued unnecessarily, "We can always tell that, because it has indiarubber tyres and the horse wears a bell. Perhaps you drove the other way?"

"Your genial hedonist very kindly drove me out here himself," said Harpur pleasantly, pulling up the knees of his trousers as he sat down in the basket chair.

Mrs. Eady picked up her sewing. "Then she has written about him," she said to herself.

"I travelled down from Exeter with young Stott," continued Harpur. "He's a dear boy. We got on tremendously well, and I couldn't refuse his invitation. In consequence, I had to leave a box of books behind at Porthlew, but I suppose I can get them fetched in the morning?"

"Oh yes," said Vivien, the word "books" having a reproachful sound to her.

"Well, I expect you're ready for supper, aren't you?" said Mrs. Eady, rising. "I'll go and hurry Janie up."

Left to themselves, the lovers were a trifle embarrassed. Harpur praised the room, and talked about his journey and young Stott. Vivien, with a keen sense of neglected duties, was humble and acquiescent.

"You're looking a great deal better, Vivien," he said, his eyes dwelling on her affectionately. "I hope you're making this a real holiday, and living as much as possible in the open air."

Considering that when the "change" was first advised, Selwyn had been inclined to think the doctors old-womanish, this was very magnanimous of him, Vivien thought. He picked up the book she had been reading, and turned over the leaves with a gratified smile.

"Oh yes, that's all very well," he said, "but you'll have to get on without even Pater for a week or two."

Vivien felt horribly mean and dishonest. She was nearly tempted to confess rather more than the truth—that the book had been in her hands merely to impress him. If Selwyn had come reproving her for idleness she would have attempted a plausible defence, but his kindness disarmed her. As she put out her hand for the book, he took hold of her wrist and kissed her fingers. She turned away her head to hide the tears that came into her eyes. “Dear!” he murmured ardently, slipping his arm round her waist. She clung to him for a moment, ashamed that he should have mistaken the cause of her emotion. She did not know herself exactly why she was upset, but she had a general idea that she ought to confess something.

Supper was a merry meal, however. Mrs. Eady, who saw that Vivien was agitated, rose to the occasion, and rattled incessantly to prevent the intrusion of any subject which might prove embarrassing.

“Penolver has a most disastrous effect upon me,” she said. “At best I’m always a sort of Sancho Panza, and on my native heath I degenerate rapidly. Vivien could tell you a tale about the difficulty of keeping mothers in the way they ought to go. If I’d come down here alone, I should have taken to cave-dwelling before now. I believe I’ve got quite an accent already.”

"Well, if this is a local way of doing trout, I hope you'll go on degenerating," said Selwyn.

"A cunning ruse to ensure the subjection of women," retorted Mrs. Eady, terrified lest Vivien should consider it a point of honour to say where the trout had come from.

"He'll think we've sold ourselves to Stott," she thought guiltily. With a fine sense of tactics, she began to talk about the Marlows.

"By the way," said Selwyn, "isn't Mr. Marlow a brother of my friend Mrs. Fleming?"

"Oh yes," answered Vivien; "he's most anxious to meet you. He's afraid you'll be at a loss for intellectual society down here."

Selwyn looked at her quickly. Irony was a new note in her conversation.

"I had thought of calling on Mrs. Fleming on my way down," he said; "but it's such a nuisance to break the journey when once you're settled."

Vivien was not quite sure whether the unnecessary and pointed reference to Mrs. Fleming was a "counter," a sly hint to her that she was not the only woman in the world, or a magnanimous admission that he too had friendships which might be open to misunderstanding. She supposed the latter. Altogether, Selwyn was overwhelming her with kindness she did not deserve. She felt that in even tolerating persons of a lower standard of life she had been disloyal

to him. Theirs was, or ought to be, a defensive alliance against the earthy, the aimless, and the slipshod.

Stott was not mentioned again by name, but he was somehow understood, not as a grievance but as a hidden text. Vivien had never before felt so strongly how fine Selwyn really was. Without seeming indulgent, he contrived to make her feel that he did not expect her to apprehend him all at once. Yet the most critical person could not have called him superior. He asked questions about Janie, and when Vivien laughingly apologised for some trivial tale about the Cove children, he said warmly—

“No, indeed ; I’m keenly interested in everything that happens to you. I should feel horribly ashamed if I knew that you did not tell me about anything that interested or amused you because you thought it was too trivial. Your letters have delighted me.”

And he had the most wonderful way with her mother, evading her intellectual limitations, and encouraging her with so much tact that she talked quite brilliantly upon subjects which Vivien herself had always believed over her head. He helped her to appreciate her own mother.

When he got up to take his leave, he spoke with sincere admiration of the sketches on the walls of the room.

"Wonderful!" he said. "After all, it only proves that if your ideals are high enough, there is little danger that you will sink to the level of your surroundings. But I mustn't preach," he said brightly, as he shook hands with Mrs. Eady, "since I've come down to do nothing but loaf in your beautiful Cornwall."

When he had gone, both mother and daughter were left feeling like guilty children not yet found out. Mrs. Eady was frankly inclined to congratulate herself, but Vivien was in a mood of passionate remorse. They sat for an hour talking round Selwyn, each wanting to ask the other questions, yet neither daring, and both wondering how Stott and Selwyn had got on together during their drive from Porthlew.

Selwyn called for Vivien at ten o'clock the next morning to go for a walk. He was admirably dressed for the purpose in a Norfolk suit of heavy tweeds, with nailed boots, and he carried a stout walking-stick. If anything, he looked a trifle too well prepared, as if he were asserting—

"There's no finicking nonsense about me."

Before Selwyn grew his moustache, ladies had said that his appearance was angelic—in the Miltonic meaning. Indeed, a spiteful critic asserted that he had assumed the decoration out of modesty for that reason; as he occasionally made use of slang words, or drank a whisky

and soda, to spare his fellow-men the embarrassment of his bright perfection. "By Jove!" on his lips had all the piquancy of a cigarette in a boudoir. His fair hair, escaping curliness, was attractively wavy, and his pale, finely cut face had the nobility of expression which redeems a delicate-featured man from effeminacy.

"I'm in your hands," he said to Vivien, after their close and silent greeting; "you must show me all your favourite corners. I suppose you're good for ten miles before lunch?"

They took the cliff path to the right of the Cove. It was a steamy day of veiled sunlight, with constant rainbows and a balmy wind out of the west. Altogether, a day for loitering, confidences looked rather than spoken, and long, intimate silences. On such a day Vivien felt something respond within herself, and she was at her best; a little troubled, not very far from tears, yet deeply happy. Seeing her thus dewy-eyed and tender-lipped, a wise lover would have been content to share her dreaming. But Selwyn was in high spirits and enthusiastic about the scenery; eager to find the right word for everything. Vivien found that thinking about her lover in favourite corners and having him there in reality was not quite the same thing. He was out of sympathy somehow, a trifle too definitely rural perhaps for a place and a time where every-

thing was a little tempered. He wanted atmosphere.

When they came to the mouth of the Rose-morran Valley they had to walk a little way inland to pick a passage over the marshy ground where the stream found its way to the sea.

"Whose place is that?" asked Selwyn, pointing to Stott's apple orchards.

Vivien told him, feeling that there was an intolerable deal of Stott in the atmosphere of Penolver.

"Ah, that reminds me," said Harpur, "you didn't tell me about the inquest you had here the other day."

"No," she said in a slightly mumbling tone, "it was altogether rather depressing, and there were so many pleasant things to write about."

He helped her from one tussock to another, and they walked a few yards in silence and a trifle self-consciously.

"You know, Vivien," he said gravely and without looking at her, "I'm afraid that what I hinted to you about your friend Mr. Stott was not very far wrong."

She felt that he was unjust, but she had nothing to say.

"You're rather interested in him, aren't you?" he asked pleasantly, with a side glance at her. "That's only natural at your age. Until one

has seen a good deal of life, anything or anybody off the beaten track seems distinguished."

"There's nothing strikingly original about farming," she objected.

"That's not putting it quite fairly," he said, colouring a little under his fair skin. "Most farmers aren't 'Varsity men."

"No, perhaps not," she admitted; "but there's no reason why they shouldn't be."

"Ah, there you are!" he said, with a good-tempered laugh; "but the moment you have to defend a person by an appeal to reason, that person is already half condemned. 'Why shouldn't he?' is equivalent to saying he is questionable. *Qui s'excuse, s'accuse*. It ought not to be necessary to explain who a person is."

"Well, it isn't necessary to explain Mr. Stott," she said, trying to laugh it off; "he can do that well enough himself."

"Did you know," he asked, "that this person Rutherford Lorraine had been to see young Stott at school before he came down here?"

"Why, no!" said Vivien, startled in spite of herself.

"Yes," said Selwyn, with a reflective smile; "the boy summed him up as a sweep—and boys have a marvellous knack of reading character. It isn't pleasant to think of a boy of thirteen, and such a nice boy, being exposed to that sort of

thing, is it? Apparently his father hadn't told him anything about the accident; it came quite as a shock to him. From what I can make out, the boy was rather surprised and disgusted at his father having such a friend. And no wonder. Prowse tells me that the man looked the very incarnation of depravity and that he made quite a scandal at the hotel in Porthlew."

"It's all very horrid and disagreeable," murmured Vivien.

"Yes," agreed Selwyn; "it seems to have made a very bad impression upon people, and it must have been a nasty shock to you. You and your mother were with Stott when they found the body, weren't you?"

Without a single word of reproach, he contrived to make her feel degraded, but not quite in the way that he intended. All this gossip and speculation about Stott was in horribly bad taste, and particularly here in the open air. She looked out to sea and was ashamed. There was the great sea, shining and untroubled, and there were the cliffs, quiet and dignified, and ~~here~~ were they arguing about the personal affairs of a man who concerned neither of them. Why couldn't they let the man alone? She was quite thankful that during the rest of the walk Selwyn talked chiefly about books. At present she did not recognise the dismal

significance of the fact that he was safer in that region.

After midday dinner, as Vivien with Selwyn and her mother sat at the open window, they saw Stott coming up the garden path followed by Hugh. In spite of Vivien's curiosity to see the boy, it was Stott she watched now. He walked in an unhurried, unself-conscious way, looking about the garden with large glances, as if he had the grip of it. She could imagine him patting and moulding the whole thing into shape. If his nature was evil, he looked singularly well on it.

"May we come in?" he called through the window.

He entered the room with his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"This is Hugh, Mrs. Eady," he said.

The boy smiled up at Mrs. Eady in a confident way as he put out a slim brown hand. He was at once on good terms with her and with Harpur, but his examination of Vivien was more exacting. Obviously there were things about her that he did not quite understand, and for a little while he was guarded in his manner. Vivien talked to him about cricket, and detecting the amateur he looked bored. It was a disconcerting discovery for Vivien that, for the prospective wife of a schoolmaster, she knew very little about

boys as boys. Stott and Harpur were deep in a long discussion about the differences between daffodils and narcissi, and her mother was listening to them. Presently Stott emerged with a laugh, saying—

“Well, if the cup is shallow you call them narcissi; if it’s long—trumpet-shaped—you call them daffodils. That’s good enough for all practical purposes.”

Harpur’s smile was a little superior, but he accepted the definition.

When Vivien left off playing down to Hugh, his brown eyes lost their wary, wild-animal look, and he became confidential.

“I say, Miss Eady,” he jerked at her suddenly. “it’s Adrian Races on Easter Monday. Are you coming?”

“What’s that?” asked Mrs. Eady. “I haven’t been to a country race-meeting for twenty years.”

“Oh, do come!” cried Hugh, jumping up and down with excitement.

Stott laughed. “I’ll drive you over, if you like,” he said to Mrs. Eady.

“I think that’s rather a great idea,” said Harpur, after a moment’s hesitation. “I’ve heard that these little local functions are very amusing.”

Vivien felt oddly ashamed. From his manner, she believed that Harpur disapproved of the idea of their going to the races, but that he had

not the courage to say so. After what he had said about Stott in the morning, there could be only one explanation of his acquiescence in the project. He was afraid of Stott, and Vivien suspected that Stott knew it. That, however, only made her more reserved in her manner to Stott. She wished that Selwyn had stood out against him, but he had no reason to plume himself. After all, it was only his coarser fibre that gave him the advantage. She had been very curious to see the two men together. Outwardly they were civil enough one to the other. Stott seemed a little amused by Harpur, and he treated Stott with careful politeness, as if whatever fault he found in him could not be openly resented before ladies.

Hugh entirely losing his shyness, gave them a spirited account of the races.

"We get quite a lot of bookies down," he said, "and people come from miles round—miners from St. Just and fishermen from Porthleven. They fight over all the old quarrels between one village and another, and there are generally two or three men run in. Oh, it's ripping sport!"

Vivien wished that, when Stott and Hugh had gone, Selwyn had not thought it necessary to explain that they were going to the races out of compliment to Hugh.

CHAPTER IX

THE first race was over when Vivien and Harpur made their way through the crowd to the rudely formed stand of raw wood on the far side of the course. Hugh, who with Mrs. Eady and Stott had driven over earlier, saw them coming, and ran forward to meet them. He wore a long overcoat and a bowler hat tipped to the back of his head, and he spoke with an air of mystery and importance.

"Thought you were going to be late," he said ; " but you haven't missed anything. Ain't it ripping ? "

A military band at the corner was braying out the " Sentinel " song from *Falka*. The noise and the excitement were at first rather alarming to Vivien, and she kept close to Harpur. The fierce, foreign-looking faces and the restless movement of the crowd made her think of the factions of a mediæval Italian town. There was a touch-and-go tension in the air, as if at any moment a word might precipitate violence.

Men and women moved and spoke with the high-pitched alacrity of people aware of a short life and determined to make the most of it. But gradually as Vivien recognised that the passionate glances and loud voices were in the main good-humoured her heart beat slower, and she looked about her with interest at the different types. There seemed to be a great number of elderly men with massive heads, the hair worn rather long, clean-shaven upper lips and bearded chins. Their eyes of a trained solemnity had unregenerate gleams in them. These old farmers might have been pagan priests in disguise with sacrificial knives hidden up their sleeves. Many of the younger men were of a pronouncedly Jewish type, with small round heads, long noses, and swarthy skins; their dark eyes remote and yet cunning. Bands of girls dressed in bright but generally harmonious colours passed to and fro, their dancing gait and the lilting cadence of their voices intensifying the oddly Oriental character of the scene. On the outskirts of the crowd a yellow-faced miner home from Africa, with a diamond pin in the bright handkerchief round his neck, and a brown slouch hat shadowing his eyes, stood apart smoking a cigar with an absorbed expression, as if he were inwardly contemplating his incredible fortune.

"You won't see anything more characteristic than this, Miss Eady," said Stott, shouldering his way up to them. "It's all one whether it's a Methodist Revival, football, wrestling, or racing—they're always ready for excitement. And Chance is the Cornishman's god,"

Vivien was struck by the mingling of classes on terms of equality. Old Sir Michael Treherne, of Botrea, the manor of the district, with his three pretty daughters, sat on the top seat of the stand shouting down challenges to a stout farmer who, standing with his gaitered legs wide apart, returned the Squire's chaff, and addressed his daughters by their names—Miss Wilmot, Miss Joan, and Miss Judith. In front of the stand, in the centre of a little group of men, a painter from Trevenen with a pale, nervous face was trying "hitches" with a jerseyed young giant of a fisherman, and apparently getting the best of it.

Stott seemed to know everybody. Vivien watched him moving among the crowd, and admired the way he was able to meet rough men on their own ground and talk to them in their own language. Here and there a man sullenly avoided him, and Vivien heard one or two unpleasant remarks about the inquest, but Stott did not seem to take any notice. Vivien wished that Harpur had something of his self-reliance. Evidently Harpur was not

quite sure whether he ought to be there, though he tried not to look repelled or condescending. He seemed rather more comfortable after he had seen the Trehernes. He tugged at his moustache in an abstracted sort of way and said—

“Well, what shall we do? Shall we sit down with your mother, or would you like to walk about a bit? I suppose one ought to have a race card. Ah, here’s a fellow with some.”

Hugh was getting restless.

“Let’s go across and listen to the bookies,” he said.

Vivien looked at Harpur, who nodded. “I think I’ll stop with your mother,” he said.

“I’m afraid Mr. Harpur isn’t enjoying himself,” said Hugh, as they crossed the course. “The people are rough, but there’s no harm in them. I don’t think I should have anything to do with the bookies, if I were you, Miss Eady, but of course I’ll put something on for you, if you like.”

In a wired-in enclosure the bookmakers stood beside boards bearing their names in letters of gold on a black ground. Vivien and Hugh approached a man who, notebook in hand, was chanting a sort of *Credo*—

“I bet six to one *bar* one. I bet six to one *bar* one.”

His name on the board had a homely look: “Andrew Mackenzie, Glasgow.” One felt that

there could be no guile in Andrew Mackenzie of Glasgow. He wore a loose coat and a Shetland wool tam-o'-shanter, made, one might suppose, by his mother. He might have just now stepped from a cottage fireside to join you in a friendly bout with Chance. He had a clean-cut, sallow face, a dark, drooping moustache, and sunken eyes that never rested for more than a moment on the same place. It was his innocent vanity to decorate his board with half a dozen printed portraits of himself.

His neighbour was Alf Johnson of Plymouth, a clean-shaved, apple-faced little man with broken teeth and a manner of extreme affability, only qualified by the wariness of his cold blue eyes. At this moment he was reproving his assistant, a rather sullen-looking fellow of the bruiser type, for incivility to a farm lad who wanted to put sixpence on Lady Montrose. Alf Johnson and Andrew Mackenzie were on the best of terms, as if aware that the only rivalry between them was that between the Northern and the Southern temperaments. Not to be outdone by Andrew Mackenzie, Alf Johnson wore his portrait in daguerreotype on his watch-chain.

In spite of the bookmakers' transparent simplicity, not much business seemed to be doing. As Hugh explained, the Cornishman is too well acquainted with Chance to put much faith in

intermediaries. He likes to take his chances neat.

The course was round four fields, the hedges forming a cross with a gap in each arm. For steeplechasing one avoided the convenient opening and jumped the adjacent hedge. Or not, as the case might be.

A bell rang, and the crowd deserted the book-makers and lined up along the course. A steeplechase was just starting.

"Let's get up on that hedge!" cried Hugh, and after a momentary struggle with dignity Vivien found herself racing across the field at his heels. Panting and laughing, she was hauled up on the hedge close by one of the jumps, and stood holding on to a hard-breathing ruffian in corduroys. From here they could see the whole course marked out with little flags. Whenever a horse refused, a little crowd collected in the course to give advice to its rider; scattering wildly as, with indignant shouts from its backers, the next horse came thundering up. Four horses ran, and one fell out. Some time after the race was all over and the crowd had closed in over the course the last horse came lumbering in, secure of the third prize.

Having once succumbed to the magic of thudding hoofs and flying turf, Vivien forgot all about Harpur and his fastidious aloofness,

and was prepared to follow Hugh wherever he led her. They went back to the betting enclosure when the odds for the next race were being chalked up. Hugh studied the figures with interest.

"Kitty—five to one," he read out with a clouded brow.

"Who's Kitty?" asked Vivien.

"You should always say 'What's so-and-so' about a horse, Miss Eady," said Hugh grandly. "Kitty is my father's pony. He bred her himself."

"Who's that then?" asked a man in a low voice and nudging his companion.

"That's young Stott of Rosemorran. Stott's running a mare. Come on."

"What's it like?"

"Aw dunno. Should be good if it belongs to Humphrey Stott. He do knaw somethen' about a haärse. Come on."

"Long odds, though," objected the other. "Humphrey Stott's a bad man, edna?"

"Aw, go' slong. I'm goin' to put my money on Humphrey Stott, whether or no. He cured my brawther from the consumption when two doctors had give him up. My brawther's brave'n talented. He can use a shouel better'n any man in the four parr'shez. Come, Alf, my dear; lev' I put hafe a dollar on Kitty."

Hard by, a boy was rubbing down a colt's legs. A sly-faced elderly man with a straw in his mouth watched him abstractedly.

"Goin' to ride that colt next race but one, are 'e?" he said presently.

The boy, continuing his work, answered coldly—

"Yes."

There was a long pause, during which the boy's ears reddened.

"Bit auver in the knees, edna?" said the man.

"You're the first man I've heerd say so, Thomas Runnels," said the boy severely, straightening himself. "Everybody says they've nivver see sech a colt down here. Some of them great authorities, too."

"Great authorities say so, do they?" said Runnels, with mild curiosity.

"Well," said the boy in a tone of suppressed triumph, "Robert Richard Polglaze up Trewyn, he say so."

"Robert Richard Polglaze up Trewyn, he say so, do he?" repeated the man thoughtfully.

"Yes," came the answer in rather an irritable tone.

"Call *he* a great authority?" asked Runnels, with gentle surprise.

"Well, he do know somethen' about a haärse."

The man turned it over in his mind, and at last tolerantly admitted—

“Yes, ’s’pose he do know somethen’ about a haärse, but there’s other people do know somethen’ about a haärse too.”

There was a long, constrained silence, and the boy resumed his grooming.

“Well,” said Runnels dispassionately, and turning away, “you take and ride’n next race but one. Then you’ll *know*.”

When Hugh and Vivien got back to the stand, they found Stott looking round rather anxiously.

“Oh, here you are,” he said in a tone of relief. He beckoned Hugh to him and whispered in his ear. Hugh nodded and sat down. The people were beginning to flock back to the stand, and Vivien noticed in passing that the outward sign of prosperity among the farmers’ wives was a sealskin jacket. The clerk of the course, a soldierly-looking man wearing a Service cloak with brass buttons, mounted on a tall roan, galloped down the field. Vivien looked at her card. The next race was a pony flat race.

As the interval passed Hugh grew fidgety. He had gone rather white, but his lips were set firmly. He whistled, tapped with his feet on the boards, shivered, yawned, and sighed. Stott avoided looking at him, and talked to Mrs. Eady and Harpur. Presently Stott’s boy Henry

appeared, leading a pony from the paddock. Hugh jumped up and stripped off his overcoat, showing a pink-and-white riding costume underneath. Mrs. Eady gave a little scream and clutched at Stott's arm.

"You're never going to let that boy ride?" she cried.

"Yes, I am," said Stott, with a laugh.

"But he'll break his neck!"

"Not he. For one thing, there are no jumps."

Mrs. Eady got up.

"Hugh, you're not to ride," she said, taking hold of his thin arm. "Let the other boy ride; he's bigger. Vivien, make him."

Hugh grinned and wriggled. Vivien looked from her mother to Stott. She was very excited and rather scared, but she wanted Hugh to ride. Stott recognised that, and laughed again. Mrs. Eady turned to Harpur.

"Selwyn," she said, "persuade Mr. Stott. Don't you think it's very wrong?"

"Well, I really don't know," said Harpur, looking from one to the other. "I——"

"Hugh, you're a dear!" screamed one of the Treherne girls. "If you pull this off, we'll kiss you"; and they came clambering down the seats, followed by their father.

"No fear!" said Hugh, with a terrified look,

and vaulted the rail. The stand roared, and people came crowding round.

"Pig!" said Wilmot Treherne to Hugh in passing. "Father, take us across to the bookies. We're going to back Kitty. Come along. What's the odds—five to one? Father, you've got to put a sovereign on for each of us and two for yourself."

By the starting-point, one of the boy riders, a mere child of ten years or so, looking horribly frightened, listened in a dazed sort of way to the orders of his master, who held the pony's head. Dismounting to examine his stirrups, he nervously avoided the pony's heels. When he saw Hugh, who addressed him as Sam Penberth, he looked more cheerful. In odd contrast to the timid youngster, another boy in black and pink sat his pony impassively. He was pale-faced and flaxen-haired, with expressionless eyes. He looked knowing but bored; once or twice he yawned.

A bell rang, and the clerk supported by a policeman cleared the course. The six ponies ranged up together, the starter dropped his little Union Jack, and they were off.

"Come along!" cried Wilmot Treherne in Vivien's ear, and grabbed her arm.

The four girls raced off to the nearest hedge. Harpur started to follow them, hesitated, and

returned to where Mrs. Eady and Stott were sitting. He felt sore and out of it.

"You've really no business," Mrs. Eady said severely to Stott. "Have you no nerves?"

Stott laughed, though he looked white and anxious.

"How can I tell the stuff he's made of unless I let him take risks?" he said.

"Well, please lend me your glasses," said Mrs. Eady.

The race was three times round the course. In the first round Kitty bolted out of the course, and for about five hundred yards Hugh seemed to lose his head completely. A loud murmur of disappointment rose from the field, mingled with savage cries of "Sarve'n right!" the almost involuntary expression of the ineradicable feeling against the "foreigner." Vivien found herself listening eagerly to catch what was said about Stott. There seemed to be no definite grievance against him, but she observed that the cries came from a knot of men with Tyacke in their midst. The youngest Treherne girl was almost whimpering. "It's a damned shame," she said; "they ought to have men all round the course."

The yellow-haired boy in black and pink had reached ahead, and for the second round was leading. Sam Penberth was gaining upon him, and Hugh followed. The rest of the field laboured

in the rear. In the third round Sam Penberth took the lead, and the interval between the yellow-haired boy and Hugh gradually diminished. The people roared encouragement, and Vivien waved her handkerchief. As Hugh ranged up alongside, the yellow-haired boy swerved viciously, but Hugh cleverly avoided him and shot past. It was now a close thing between him and Sam Penberth. In the gap of the last hedge, where the turf was trodden into greasy mud, Sam's pony slipped and fell. Sam was up in a moment, but the race was over, and Hugh cantered in an easy first.

At the winning-post he was swallowed up by the crowd. Two Trevenen painters seized and bore him in triumph to the stand.

"Well done, old man!" said Stott quietly; but Vivien saw that he gripped the boy hard and that he was white and trembling. At the time she could not understand it.

"Why," she thought, "if he was so afraid, did he let the boy ride?"

Hugh saw the Treherne girls bearing down upon him.

"Oh, I want to speak to Sam Penberth," he said, jumping up and struggling into his overcoat. He pushed his way into the little group surrounding the other ponies.

Sam Penberth, plastered with mud, was holding his pony's head and submitting to the fluent criticism of its owner.

"You're not fit to ride a clothes-haärse," he said. "Dedden I tell you to give her her head after the first round? You held her in: you're nawthen' but a coward."

Sam listened in sullen silence, not very far from tears. Suddenlly he turned round and with an impulsive gesture stroked the pony's ears, as if to say—

"Never mind, old girl; we did our best."

"Beastly hard lines, Sam," said Hugh, holding out his hand. "It wasn't your fault."

Meanwhile Vivien and the Treherne girls were talking together.

"I forgot we haven't been introduced," said Wilmot. "You're Miss Eady, ain't you? I'm Wilmot, and this is Joan and this Judith, but we call her Judy."

Sir Michael, a purple-faced old gentleman, with quick-tempered, bushy white eyebrows, came bustling up.

"I say, Stott," he said, "introduce me to Mrs. Eady. Spotted you for a Cornishwoman, ma'am. And that is your daughter? My girls ought to have called, but we've been away, groping about the fogs in London. Stott, your boy's first-rate. Don't think the schoolmasters

have done him much harm. You'll have to let him join the Hunt next season."

Harpur was introduced after an interval, which though accidental looked pointed. Sir Michael screwed up his eyes to look at him, and said, "What, what?" to Harpur's attempts at conversation. Harpur was only trying to express his general appreciation of sport, but Sir Michael misunderstood him.

"Feller tryin' to teach me about horses," he grumbled to Stott, turning his back upon Harpur.

Harpur bore himself with admirable coolness, but Vivien could see that he was annoyed, and she felt sure that he held Stott responsible for a slight due to a choleric old gentleman's deafness and clannish prejudices. It was unfortunate that she and her mother seemed to be accepted as Stott's friends. Stott was destined to be in every unpleasantness that affected her lover. It did not strike her then that love ought not to need so much forethought and protective handling.

Tyacke, who had lost a shilling on the last race, was dancing before the stand, with his clenched fist upraised, cursing Stott, whom he denounced as a "g'eat mean man" and a "bloody murderer." Stott sat smiling and immovable. Sir Michael chuckled hoarsely and dug Stott in the ribs, with a sly "Did you?" For a moment it looked as

if there might be trouble, but the quick sympathies of the people were now with the winner, and Tyacke's outcry only raised a laugh. A policeman good-humouredly hustled him off the course.

Now that the chief events of the day were over, people began to look bored. A drizzling rain had set in, and the appearance of the place degenerated. The odour of damp grass and bad cigars was nauseating. The band, in shining oilskins, was playing dejectedly. The book-makers were a mere butt for chaff, no longer good-humoured. The stand was a cluster of umbrellas, and people crouched under every hedge. Somebody in Stott's party suggested that they had had enough of it. Only Hugh protested, and was overruled. Vivien looked at Harpur.

"When you like," he said, raising his eyebrows significantly. "I've been ready for quite a long time."

As they crossed the fields Hugh begged that they might just watch the open steeplechase. They stood sheltering under the hedge by the second jump. On the hedge above them stood an elderly man with a long, red horse-face and grey whiskers. He was loudly haranguing a companion, the owner of one of the horses, who stood on the ground.

The leading horse cleared the jump in good

style, but, as the second pounded up, the man on the ground moved nervously forward, with "Steady, Will!" The jockey, baulked for a second, pulled short; the horse struck the hedge with its knees and turned a somersault.

Man and horse lay so still that Vivien thought that both were killed. She shut her eyes and clung to Harpur. The old man on the hedge broke into bitter neighing laughter.

"She's done, Sid, she's done! She'll never run no more!" he cried.

Out of the press a man was loudly calling—

"Mr. Jackson! Mr. Jackson!"

The jockey got up suddenly from the ground. His white clothes were covered with mud, and he stood blinking and nervously smiling, as if he did not know what had happened. The horse lay perfectly still.

There were loud yells of "Clear the course! clear the course! Get out of his way! Give him a chance!" as another horse was heard approaching. The fallen horse was dragged upon its legs, and stood with hanging head, miserably trembling.

The old man on the hedge still laughed in cruel derision.

"Ha, ha, ha! She's bate, Sid, she's bate! Oats and banes is short up to St. Austell; oats and banes is short up to St. Austell!"

The still smiling jockey suddenly fainted, and was carried away.

As Vivien with the rest of the party passed out of the field, Harpur looked at her with a significant smile. She was splashed with mud, her hair was in disorder, her skirt torn, and her hands were scratched by brambles. The old man was still shouting, "Oats and banes is short up to St. Austell !".

A little while ago Vivien had felt nothing but the fine excitement of the racing, but the last episode brought home to her its accompanying brutality. Harpur smiled at her again and looked at her dress, and from her to Hugh. She felt that Harpur had somehow scored. He always seemed to be able to condemn people without saying anything.

Faintly in the distance they heard the old man shouting—

"Oats and banes is short up to St. Austell !"

CHAPTER X

AT half-past ten on a bright morning Vivien Eady and Selwyn Harpur set out from Penolver to see the pictures intended for the Academy and other exhibitions, which it is the pleasant custom of Trevenen painters annually to exhibit in the little Gallery on the dreary road between Trevenen and Porthlew. The lovers had spent the evening before reading all about the development of the *plein air* movement in painting, and Vivien was complacently sure that she would never again confuse Manet with Monet, or Rousseau of Barbizon with the philosopher of Geneva. In her pocket she carried a little notebook with a well-sharpened pencil; for, as Selwyn said—

“It’s no use looking at pictures unless you do it systematically. The weakness of most people is not that they don’t take an interest in things, but that they have no standard to refer them to. Half the battle is to know beforehand what you are to look for and how you are to look at it.”

During the two days' interval since Adrian Races Vivien, confined to the house by bad weather, had been in a chastened mood. She could not deny that until shocked into sanity by the incident of the fallen horse she had thoroughly enjoyed her low surroundings. The excitement of men and beasts, the straining of muscles, the noise and the danger had aroused some primitive instinct within her, and Selwyn's pitying smile and magnanimous silence as they left the field were like a cold douche, causing her acute humiliation. She was, she thought with horror, no better than those Roman ladies who flocked to the brutal sports of the arena. It was no wonder that Selwyn had shown to poor advantage in that company of boors and bookmakers. Quite unconsciously, and without considering the import of the comparison, she compared him with Stott.

"Anyhow," she thought, "put Stott in a drawing-room, or in the company of scholars, and he would be a complete failure."

It was quite unjust, she thought, to say that Selwyn was priggish. Hugh Stott liked him immensely, and that was a good test. Naturally Selwyn, with his intimate experience of boys, objected to Hugh's association with the sort of people one met at race-meetings. Altogether, he was rather sorry for Hugh, he said,

and he had himself proposed that the Eadys should invite him to spend an evening with them. Hugh had come, and Selwyn had proved his freedom from prejudice with regard to all innocent forms of recreation by joining in quite noisy card games. No wonder Selwyn was popular with boys ! He gave himself up to the simplest amusements without any sign of unbending.

Vivien felt now with great satisfaction that they were going to a place where Selwyn would have every chance of being properly appreciated. She was not vain, but she was not above the feminine desire to show off her capture. After seeing the pictures, they were to lunch with Oglander, the Secretary of the Gallery, and Vivien already imagined a little circle of cultivated persons listening with deference to her lover's remarks.

Selwyn himself was in the best of spirits, as if stimulated by the prospect of meeting his intellectual equals after his week's exile at Penolver. He pointed his gay tenderness with excursions in elementary natural history. At school, he explained, he conducted a field-club for supervised birds-nesting and the higher collection of butterflies. After their marriage, he suggested, Vivien would find this a pleasant means of engaging the confidence of his pupils. He talked admirably about country life in general.

"Oh, it's a glorious thing sometimes to live the life of a savage," he said, taking off his cap and letting the breeze play upon his fine brow, as they stood for a moment at the top of the hill, "to eat and sleep and use your muscles. I'm so glad you're having this long opportunity to store up health and strength. There's a risk, of course, unless you have some definite intellectual interest. Kingsley has done the thing awfully well in the *Water Babies*: the chapter about the Doasyoulikes, don't you remember? That old ruffian Treherne is a good example," he said, with a good-natured laugh. "I'm sorry for his daughters. I daresay if you studied the local history of these out-of-the-way-places you'd come upon an astonishing number of painful *mésalliances*, generally due to the lack of mental discipline. It doesn't matter how keen you are on your hobbies: unless you keep some order and method in following them you'll degenerate. No good work was ever done in dressing-gown and slippers, and the danger in getting out of touch with your order is the delusion that little formal observances don't matter."

The allusion to Stott was not so subtle but that Vivien perceived it, though she believed that it was unintended. Perhaps it was; in which case it was all the more significant.

But Vivien was not in a mood to be critical.

The spring was in her blood, and she was tremulously happy, daring the season in a pretty frock of primrose delaine. She walked with a springy step, with flushed cheeks and parted lips : never, thought her lover, had she looked more desirable ; sensitive, warm, and alive to her finger tips. It was the sort of day called locally "foxy," that is to say, stolen out of unsettled weather, with a scalding sun, clean, moist air, and white fleecy clouds in an incredibly blue sky. The grass after two days' heavy rain was very green, the gorse bushes were broad bucklers of gold, and under the blackthorns breaking into flower the hedgerows were packed with a lush growth of hemlock and wild arum tumbling out of the earth to greet the spring. Up in the air many larks were passionately singing, as if alone out of living things aware that this was only a momentary respite in an uncertain season.

Besides her enjoyment of the immediate hour, Vivien had the pleasantest thoughts about the future. Yesterday, Selwyn had discussed a delightful plan with her and her mother. This year he intended to spend part of his summer holidays in Paris : why shouldn't they come with him ? It would shorten their stay at Penolver by some weeks, but Vivien's health had so improved that by the end of July the object of the visit might be considered attained.

The trip, Selwyn said, could be managed very economically. Vivien had never been out of England, but her imagination was filled with enchanting visions of the Louvre and Notre Dame and the Luxembourg Gardens.

They had come to the top of the long hill which descends into Trevenen, and were looking down upon the bright bay of barred colour and the shining town. Vivien murmured over to herself the magical names of the hills ramparting the north and east : Tregoning, and Trencrom, and Castle-an-Dinas. They were like the names of older gods ironically waiting. Over by the Mount a white cloud of steam showed where a train was hurrying on its long journey to London, and seeing it Vivien felt a sudden pang. It would be very hard to leave all this even to marry Selwyn Harpur. Just for a moment the conditions of her future life seemed unattractive. If only she could have had both Selwyn Harpur and Cornwall together !

A line of little waggonettes blocked the roadway before the Gallery, and people were flocking in when Vivien and Harpur approached. Oglander, bareheaded and with his hands in his pockets, stood at the top of the steps. Oglander was a yellow-bearded man, with anxious blue eyes, and the high, narrow, unsymmetrical forehead of the visionary. He had not met Harpur before,

and when Vivien introduced him he held his hand and stared at him with troubled earnestness. He had the disconcerting look of seeing something tragically wrong invisible to other people—the look of a doctor startled by grave symptoms of which the patient is unaware.

“Oh yes,” he said nervously, in answer to Harpur’s remark that he had known and admired his work for a long time. Being Secretary to the Gallery, Oglander could not leave the place that morning without discourtesy to the public, but he stood on the steps outside to escape from people who wanted to talk to him about his work. Vivien sympathetically guessed this, and hurried Selwyn inside. Two very distinguished-looking men, one white-haired and the other young and slender, with dark eyes and a melancholy, bearded face, stood by the inner doorway. Harpur touched Vivien’s arm.

“There,” he said in a low voice, “that’s the real type—very different from the loafers we saw at Adrian Races. One can expect fine work from men like that.”

The elder of the two men turned round.

“One shilling, please, sir,” he said. He was the caretaker of the Gallery. His companion, Vivien afterwards learned, was the reporter of the local paper.

The place was filled with a chattering crowd,

chiefly of women. An overpowering odour of naphthalin proclaimed the first resumption of spring clothing. Comparatively few persons seemed to be trying to look at the pictures, but everybody was in a good temper and talking about the weather, which it appeared was as a rule notoriously unkind to Show Day.

"The pictures? Yes, ain't they lovely? What's So-and-So got?" was asked by people who did not trouble to look. Those who had had the privilege of seeing some of the pictures beforehand in studios said so loudly and at frequent intervals.

"Ah yes, but you ought to have seen it a week ago. He's tickled it up a lot since then, and spoilt it, to my thinking."

"What's Lumley got?"

"Oh, his usual girl in a red dress."

Later on Vivien encountered Lumley's usual girl, with honey-coloured hair drawn over her ears, and tired eyes, in a nasal voice complaining to her companion that "Lumley's is the only decent thing in the Show."

Unhappy-looking painters, avoiding each other's eyes, were conducting groups of friends from picture to picture. As a rule, the degree of the painter's depression seemed to be the measure of his work. The exhibitor of a magnificent marine looked on the edge of suicide, while he

who had painted the only poor picture in the room stood with his legs wide apart pulling at his long grey moustache with a heavily ringed hand and glancing about him with debonair freedom, as if inviting recognition. A group of young students stooped and peered before his picture. They clung together in a frightened way, whispering incredulously, as if they were victims of a common hallucination. Every now and then one of them would cast an uneasy glance over his shoulder at the man he had been told that it was his duty to admire. Here and there a painter from Porthia or some other colony met an exhibitor, and there was a laconic greeting and a quick interchange of wary glance between the two men, as if each were anxious to learn how the other prospered.

"You can't see any pictures, you know," said Oglander discouragingly, as he came up to Vivien's elbow, "but you may get some fun out of our sufferings."

It was as if he apologised for the pictures being left about. His own beautiful work he dodged as long as he was able, but Harpur would not be denied. The subjects of Oglander's paintings were simple to the point of naïveté, yet always with a subtle, almost furtive, idea controlling the reticent brushwork which only a painter could recognise to be masterly. A woman

giving a cup of water to a child ; a man with a lantern unmooring a boat ; an old horse waiting patiently by a well. Vivien could not help feeling that in spite of his good-breeding and cultivation there was in Selwyn a want of delicacy, an emotional hardness which jarred upon the painter. Selwyn, brightly intelligent, plied Oglander with questions, and Oglander made curious noises in his throat and moved his fingers, while his eyes rested on Vivien's, as if he instinctively turned to her for sympathetic understanding.

"I get a saucer, you know, an ordinary kitchen saucer," he said earnestly,—“I believe my wife buys them for a penny each,—and I rub the colour down with—— No, that's not what you mean? Oh—I liked the colour of her hair with that tablecloth. I wanted to paint hair, you see,” he concluded miserably, as if confessing a sin.

Vivien was reminded of something which a young Frenchman had once said to her. In his enthusiasm to study English institutions he had found himself at a Salvation Army meeting, where he had been pestered with questions about the state of his soul. “It was indecent,” he said gravely, “to ask me about my soul.” Obviously Oglander thought Selwyn indecent.

She was irritated by seeing one or two painters look at Oglander with quizzical sympathy, as

they shouldered their way through the crowd. Why couldn't Selwyn be content to look at the pictures without talking about them? she thought angrily. There were quite a number of things worth seeing, but by standing still chattering they missed their chance of seeing them. Presently she was aware that Stott had come into the room, and that vexed her for two reasons. She was annoyed that he should be able involuntarily to make her feel his presence, and that he should have another opportunity of being amused by Harpur. She watched Stott's broad back moving among the people, and she noticed that the painters greeted him with easy familiarity and that they seemed glad to show him their pictures. The back of his neck was rather red, and Vivien decided that it indicated a gross and stubborn nature.

Oglander kept saying, "Yes, oh yes," in his nervous way, while he studied Harpur's face with frightened but fascinated eyes. Vivien remembered to have heard that in spite of the mysticism of his painting he had the gift of merciless caricature.

Harpur was just condoling with Oglander for having to expose his delicate work to all these Philistines when the Marlows came up. Mr. Marlow batted upon Harpur, and Oglander made his escape.

"The usual things, I suppose," said Mr. Marlow gloomily. "Does it take much brains to do that?" he added, pointing to an exquisite study of snow in sunlight.

Nobody felt competent to answer him, and Mrs. Marlow patting him on the arm said, "Now you two learned people put your heads together, and Miss Eady will take me round and tell me what to admire. I'm absolutely ignorant about art," she confided to Vivien, "so you must be very patient with me. Oh, that! Tell me all about it. Then the man didn't take the houses exactly line for line; he waited for the light to fall upon them so. Like the Druids, wasn't it? Didn't they build their temples so that the sun—but of course I may be wrong. Oh, not so much the place as the impression of it." She repeated the words, "not so much the place as the impression of it" to herself silently, like a hen drinking water. Vivien could see her lips moving. "Then that's what they mean by Impressionism, is it? I've often wondered. And I suppose they put the effect on on varnishing day? But the subject—oh, motive, you say. How *very* interesting!—and ever so much more difficult. Motive. People talk about motives when they mean something very deep, don't they? Of course, if pictures have to have motives," she continued

in a tone of sudden illumination, "I can understand what my husband says about artists needing ideals. Gus, come here! Miss Eady has found a picture with a Motive in it. Isn't it curious? I should never have found it out by myself."

A glance of ecstatic enjoyment passed between two painters who stood close by. One asked a question and jerked his head to indicate Harpur, and Vivien heard the other reply—

"No,—friend of Stott's."

"So these three funny little pictures were painted by Mr. Oglander?" said Mrs. Marlow, moving on a few paces. "How sweet of him! Now you must show me what Mr. Purchas has painted. He's a nephew of Sir Walter Purchas. It's so nice to feel that he belongs to one's own people, isn't it? In these Radical days quite common people are artists, and I think that an artist who is a gentleman by birth ought to be encouraged; don't you? I always look at Mr. Purchas's pictures."

Mr. Marlow strolled up as they stood before a big water-colour of a wave breaking in iridescent foam.

"Whose is that?" he asked, taking hold of his wife's arm.

Vivien read out the painter's name.

"Oh, that man," he said coldly, and turned away.

Vivien said that she thought it was rather a good picture.

"That may be," admitted Mr. Marlow, "but the man is separated from his wife."

A little commotion at the door of the Gallery attracted Vivien's notice. A stout, little, middle-aged woman with very light blue eyes had just entered and was being mobbed by a gang of painters. She was shaking hands all round, and talking and laughing excitedly.

"There's Mrs. Hyde, Mrs. Hyde," varied by "Polly Hyde," Vivien heard from several points in the Gallery. Mrs. Hyde broke off in the middle of saying to Oglander, "No, I've come to see all you dear boys, and not your silly old pictures," and gave a delighted little scream.

"Why, there's Humphrey Stott!" she cried. "Oglander, Lumley, somebody take me, fetch him to me!"

Somebody at the far end of the room spoke to Stott, and he slewed round quickly, his face lighting up. He pushed his way through the crowd, looking pleased, but rather apprehensive, until he met the advancing Mrs. Hyde in a little open space beside Vivien. Mrs. Hyde put out her two hands to grasp his heartily.

"Well, fancy meeting you—you down here!" she cried. "What are you doing? My word, but you're looking jolly and fit, you great

thing ! And how did the Experiment turn out ? ”

“ ‘Ssh ! ’ ” said Stott warningly, with an involuntary movement of his eyes. Mrs. Hyde following it glanced quickly round, and took Vivien in with shrewd interest. Stott bridged over the awkward moment.

“ Mrs. Hyde, let me introduce Miss Eady, ” he said.

Vivien felt her hand taken and shaken impulsively, while the merciless blue eyes examined her.

“ This is extraordinary luck, Miss Eady, ” said Mrs. Hyde. “ I come down to Trevenen to steal a week with the old gang, and the first person I tumble across is the only man I ever loved. Oh, Humphrey Stott, Humphrey Stott ! Look at the fellow ! You’d think he’d avoid me, instead of standing there laughing. Well, but what are you doing in Trevenen, Humphrey Stott ? Are *you* painting too ? ”

“ No ; I’m farming, ” said Stott hastily.

Vivien was pushed from them by the people who were beginning to leave the Gallery, so that beyond Mrs. Hyde’s surprised exclamation she could not hear what was said. “ Then the Experiment isn’t anything to do with farming, ” was her first thought. She was oddly discomposed. She felt sure that Mrs. Hyde was under a misapprehension about herself, and that her handshake

was intended to be congratulatory. It was a horribly uncomfortable experience, and yet at the back of her mind there was a vague, inexplicable feeling of pleasure. She looked round hurriedly for Harpur, who answered her signal with his eyes, and made his way to her.

"Shall we get out of this?" he said.

It was some minutes before they could work round to the door, and when they reached it Mrs. Hyde was back again talking to Oglander, and Stott had disappeared. Vivien could not avoid recognising that they were talking about herself and Harpur. Mrs. Hyde, whose humorous eyes were capable of extreme seriousness, looked at her now rather disappointedly, and she studied Harpur without enthusiasm.

Oglander introduced Harpur to Mrs. Hyde with an alacrity which in so gentle a man seemed diabolical.

"As soon as Lumley's wife can tear him away from his masterpieces, we'll go to lunch," he said. "Stott can't come," he added regretfully; "he's got to go home to kill a pig, or something."

CHAPTER XI

"WELL," said Mrs. Hyde, resting her folded hands on the table, "it's good to see you all again, though you have most of you got married, or R.A.'d, or otherwise converted to respectability. May I have a cigarette?—and don't any of you smoke penny cigars nowadays? It's really very kind of you, Oglander, to extend the hand of brotherhood to a battered old playwright with nothing but a bad reputation to her name."

Mrs. Hyde was reported to make three thousand a year and to spend four. She dressed in rusty black like a superannuated governess, and gave half her income away, though she complained bitterly of her poverty. It was said that the only manager who had thought to get the better of her in a matter of royalties had learned his mistake at the wrong end of a horsewhip.

She looked round the table with an affectionate smile, while her light, satirical eyes involuntarily commented upon her friends. With the news of Polly Hyde in Trevenen, Oglander's list of in-

vitations had been at the last moment extended, and half the colony was there. During the half score years since she had been among them many changes had taken place. Reputations had been made and lost; the brilliant young rebel had sobered into the dull, popular painter, and the raw student was now making duchesses famous on canvas. Some of her old boon companions were dead, some remained exactly as they had been, and to a few of the men who sat at Oglander's table Polly Hyde was only an extravagant legend, half believed. Nothing escaped her eyes, as they rested on each man and woman in turn. She observed the worried lines on this man's forehead, the complacency on the face of that other; this man's seedy coat and the too smart gown of that woman were noted with the same humorous sympathy. Under her kindly, satirical eyes this man was perhaps not so satisfied with his prosperity as he had been, while that one with the shabby coat and careworn face lifted his head with a new reassurance that after all the work for its own sake was good enough. Mrs. Hyde's eyes dimmed for a moment as she recalled, in passing, the dead or those, unhappier, fallen out of the race, and lit up in quick curious examination of strange faces—dwelling with approval on some and questioningly on others. Round she looked

and back again to Mrs. Oglander, pale, pretty, and rather shabby, at the far end of the table, and, looking at her hostess, Polly Hyde's smile became so deeply tender that Mrs. Oglander's eyes brimmed over and she turned away her head. Mrs. Hyde's eyes returned at once to Oglander sitting on her right ; Oglander, shy, middle-aged, and tired, the pet of the colony ; Oglander whose pictures were in half the Galleries of Europe, and whom the British Public consistently despised, and she patted his hand as it lay on the table.

"*Eh bien !*" she said, with a sigh and a wave of her plump little hand, "*continuez, mes enfants, continuez.*"

The little emotional strain was over, and they all laughed and began talking together.

"Now tell me about the new boy," said Mrs. Hyde briskly. "When I knew him—oh, ever so long ago—he was helping lame dogs over stiles out of the newspapers and I was hawking curtain-raisers up and down the Strand. Eh dear ! There'll never be times like those again. Tell me about Humphrey Stott."

There was a little silence, and then Lumley, a harsh-featured man with spectacles, said with a laugh—

"We want you to tell us ; and I may as well warn you that you've made us horribly jealous of him."

Mrs. Hyde's eyes snapped quickly in the direction of Selwyn Harpur, who was pouring milk into his coffee, and she said carelessly—

"Oh, I expect I can't tell you anything that you don't know. Humphrey Stott's got the biggest heart in England and by no means the softest head. He's as obstinate as a mule and as proud as the Devil—saving your presence, Mr. Marlow."

"Carried unanimously," said Lumley. "I love Stott like a brother, and so I think do the rest of us here, because although we're Academized and drink the best Burgundy—pass the bottle, Purchas—we know a man when we see one. Still, we're not all the world, and some of Stott's neighbours think that he ought to be more indulgent to their curiosity."

"What d'you mean?" said Mrs. Hyde sharply.

"Oglander, explain," said Lumley, with a gesture of terror.

"Well," said Oglander nervously, and colouring up over his fair skin, "I suppose one might say it's the Covers, mightn't one?"

"How's that?" demanded Mrs. Hyde. "Are they jealous of his setting up farming, or what?"

"Possibly that may have something to do with it," said Oglander; "but the apparent grievance is that Stott keeps his own counsel about his own private affairs."

He told her about the inquest.

"Eh, what's that?" she asked sharply. "Rutherford Lorraine dead, is he? Well," she added breezily, "that's good news, anyhow."

Vivien, who had been listening intently, felt sure that Stott had already told Mrs. Hyde about Lorraine's death.

"Altogether too good news for Stott in the opinion of the Cove people," said Mr. Marlow drily, "though they don't exactly know why."

Mrs. Hyde leaned back to look at him, grunted, and turned round to Oglander again.

"I believe Tyacke is at the bottom of it, isn't he, Lumley?" asked Oglander.

Lumley nodded.

"Oh, that old devil," said Mrs. Hyde contemptuously. "I know him. He's the man that got his head broken for watching lovers through a spy-glass, isn't he? But nobody pays any attention to old Tyacke, do they?"

"He is the most regular churchgoer in the Cove," murmured Mr. Marlow.

Oglander shifted uncomfortably in his chair, and tried to change the subject.

"Well, but what has old Tyacke got against Humphrey Stott?" persisted Mrs. Hyde obstinately, grinding the stump of her cigarette upon her saucer.

"Oh, the thing is ridiculous, of course," said

Oglander, with growing embarrassment ; "but, as Mr. Marlow says, this scallywag Lorraine, whom it is quite evident Stott didn't want hanging around, was drowned so conveniently that in spite of Stott's straightforward evidence at the inquest and the verdict they gave, the chuckle-headed Covers are discovering mares' nests."

"Do you mean to tell me that they say Stott murdered the man?" cried Mrs. Hyde incredulously.

"Not in so many words," said Oglander, "nor do they really think so, but they nod and wink and whisper. To tell you the truth, they wouldn't mind if he had—so long as he had done it somewhere else. One or two of them have wanted some pretext against him for a long time. They've taken to all sorts of petty annoyances; killing fowls, pulling up fruit trees—nothing serious, you know, but queering his pitch generally. I suppose that they hope to disgust him, so that he'll leave the place. My opinion is that it comes from their superstition. They believe that Stott's a bad man, and they're afraid of judgment falling on the wrong people."

Mrs. Hyde drew in her lips, and looked round the table with disapproving eyes.

"If Humphrey Stott wants a friend——" she began.

"No, no, Mrs. Hyde," said Lumley in a tone of vexation; "don't be afraid. You know us better than that. Still, one can't help feeling that Stott doesn't go out of his way to conciliate people."

"Why should he?" she asked, flaring up again, as she lit another cigarette.

"There's a difference between keeping your own counsel and trampling on other people's susceptibilities," said Mr. Marlow. "I suppose," he asked, turning to Oglander, "you heard about the locket?"

"No," said Oglander, and his tone implied, "I don't want to."

"It was rather interesting," said Mr. Marlow, with an impressive drawl, now that he had the ear of the table. "You know how old Tyacke is always poking about on the boulders? One day last week he found a gold and enamel locket which had evidently fallen from Lorraine's body when they moved it. One surmises that the poor fellow had pawned his watch and chain to pay his railway fare to Cornwall, and for sentimental reasons detached and kept the locket. Naturally Tyacke took it up to Stott, and being a poor man he waited for a reward. Stott offered him ten shillings—an unnecessarily large sum, I should have thought. However, Tyacke, no doubt mistakenly, thought that the

locket was of some considerable value, and wanted more. In fact, I believe he asked for five pounds. Whereupon Stott flew into a passion and told him to keep the locket and go—— I will not repeat his words.”

Lumley roared with laughter.

“That’s just like Stott,” he said ; “ he grossly overpaid the old rascal, but the moment he began to try it on, kicked him out of the house. But I’m rather surprised at so shrewd a customer as old Tyacke overreaching himself like that. He doesn’t often mistake his man.”

“ Yes,” said Mr. Marlow acidly, “ Tyacke is a very intelligent man. He showed me the locket. It contained the miniature portrait of a young woman.”

He carefully selected and lit a cigarette.

“ I fancy that I’ve seen a photograph of the same young woman at Stott’s house. Indeed, I always understood that she was Stott’s wife.”

“ You never told me all this, Gus,” said Mrs. Marlow excitedly. “ How romantic ! ”

Mr. Marlow said something about the inadvisability of causing gossip.

“ But,” said Mrs. Marlow, her thin cheeks flushing as she looked round for encouragement, “ it is among the very nicest people that one hears of scandals of that sort, is it not ? ”

"It is not to their credit, my dear," murmured Mr. Marlow.

Vivien had been watching Mrs. Hyde eagerly, and was relieved to see that she was intensely amused.

"Then you connect this locket with some dark and dreadful mystery in Stott's past life, and you suppose that he was willing to submit to blackmail to the extent of ten bob but no more?" she asked satirically. "Really, Mr. Marlow, as a working dramatist myself, I must say that your feeling for plot is more in evidence than your instinct for psychology."

Mr. Marlow laughed awkwardly.

"Well, Mrs. Hyde," he said, "with that doubtful compliment I'll rest on my laurels."

But Mrs. Hyde was not going to let him off so easily.

"By the way, why did you say 'naturally' Tyacke took the locket to Stott?" she asked, protruding her underlip a little.

"I thought I mentioned that he showed it to me first," said Mr. Marlow, colouring.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said Mrs. Hyde, with a grim smile. "And did you think it necessary to harrow Tyacke's simple soul with all that Surrey-side business about the two portraits?"

"The resemblance, possibly accidental, was so striking," said Mr. Marlow composedly, "that, perhaps indiscreetly, I commented upon it."

Mrs. Hyde blew out a cloud of smoke and blinked sagaciously upon the company.

"Obviously," she said, "Tyacke is at the bottom of it. Oglander, my dear man, give me a wee drop of whisky. I've got a nasty taste in my mouth. It must be your expensive cigarettes—I can only afford Woodbines myself. Now let's talk about something pleasant: Miss Eady is bored."

Vivien coloured and laughed. Everybody had seemed so interested in the little duel between Mrs. Hyde and Mr. Marlow that she had thought her own close attention unnoticed. At the time she did not recognise that the point of her interest was the coupling of Stott's name with a woman. Now everybody turned and looked at her, and she felt that Harpur was studying her curiously. She blushed hotter, and hastily picked up and pretended to drink from her empty coffee-cup.

After the little slap—as if to remind Vivien of her power—Mrs. Hyde nodded encouragingly, and looked at her with kindly-ironical eyes that said, "I like you, but you're rather a fool."

"How do you like Penolver, Miss Eady?" she asked aloud; adding, "I shall be coming out to see my friend Humphrey Stott before I go back to town and you can invite me to tea, if you like. How long are you stopping there?"

Vivien told her, and spoke of her contemplated visit to Paris.

"You'll like Paris," said Mrs. Hyde, "if you go the right way about seeing things. Most people don't. They stick to the Grand Boulevards, which swarm with beastly Americans. Take my tip and put up at one of the hotels on the Quais or in the Luxembourg quarter. When do you go? It's not unlikely that I shall be in Paris myself in July or August."

Vivien observed that Harpur did not look over-pleased. She was quick-witted enough to understand the reason why. Whether there was any unpleasant mystery about Stott's earlier life or not, it was quite evident that Mrs. Hyde was in his confidence. She had asked questions not to gain information about him, but to find out who were his friends and how much they knew about his affairs. She had played Mr. Marlow with such obvious enjoyment that Vivien could not believe she was seriously concerned on Stott's account. But perhaps Mrs. Hyde was not particular. Several times during luncheon Vivien had caught herself wondering what Mrs. Hyde had meant by her reference "the Experiment," which Stott had so promptly suppressed. Certainly it had nothing to do with his farming, because at the moment Mrs. Hyde did not know that he was

farming. Mr. Marlow's story about the locket reawakened Vivien's curiosity about Mrs. Stott. At any rate, Mrs. Hyde knew all about her. But for Harpur, Vivien would have tried to make friends with Mrs. Hyde. In spite of her bluntness she liked her, and she believed that Mrs. Hyde felt kindly disposed towards herself. But it was quite evident that Harpur did not like Mrs. Hyde nor she him. They were sparring already over some point in the topography of Paris. Two or three of the others chimed in, supporting Mrs. Hyde, and Harpur had to retire with the implication of tourist-knowledge. It was a new experience for Vivien to see her lover at a disadvantage in the society of his equals, and though it was over so unimportant a question the fact impressed her more deeply than she knew.

On the whole, however, Harpur seemed to get on very well with the painters. They were at first inclined to be a little amused by his preciseness, but since he had travelled a good deal and seemed really to care for pictures, they listened to him respectfully. But, as Vivien observed, while Harpur seemed to approach both art and literature with gloves on, the other men treated them familiarly as common things of life. The difference in their attitudes interested

her, though she did not draw any conclusion from it at the moment.

The Marlows drove Vivien and Harpur home, and for once Vivien was glad of their company. She was not quite in the mood to be alone with Selwyn. She felt guilty, though of what she did not know. Selwyn seemed in a particularly good temper.

"Well, whatever may be said about the progress of British Art," he said, "there's no doubt about the social improvement of artists. That amusing but vulgar little person Mrs. Hyde seemed to belong to quite another century. A little trying to have the acquaintances of one's Bohemian days sprung upon one like that. But the Oglanders were amazingly tactful: nobody would have guessed that they were not glad to see Mrs. Hyde. I wonder why Stott slipped away so mysteriously. Not very kind to desert his champion. Poor Stott! he seems fated to run up against undesirable or too-familiar acquaintances."

"You cannot bury the past," said Mr. Marlow solemnly. "By the way," he added, "my sister, Mrs. Fleming, is coming down next Wednesday."

CHAPTER XII

WHEN you're in the procession you can't look out of the window; and Mrs. Hyde coming down to Cornwall with a fresh eye, and that a dramatist's, saw a situation not properly appreciated by the principal actors in it. She recognised that Harpur's aversion from Stott was rooted in something deeper than even fundamental differences of temperament and ideals, and in spite of Vivien Eady's engagement to Harpur she was by no means convinced that the situation was not capable of interesting developments.

"Things only want a little pulling together," she said to herself, "and then, pouf!" Meanwhile she was, in her own words, testing Stott's dynamics.

Mrs. Hyde had driven out from her hotel in Porthlew to an early dinner with Stott and Hugh. Certainly Stott did not seem to be worrying about the hostility of his neighbours. He ate well, and his manner was that of a man doing the

thing he liked without anxiety about the future. It was evident, thought Mrs. Hyde, that Fate or enemies could only strike at him through Hugh. She had to admit that to all appearances the Experiment, whom she had not seen since he was an ailing baby, had turned out admirably. He was now a well-mannered, high-spirited, intelligent little boy. In character and disposition he might have been Stott's child by a woman with whom he had lived in perfect sympathy. But Hugh's appearance, coupled with what Mrs. Hyde had heard at the Oglanders', quite persuaded her that, given the slightest clue, the fact of his parentage was certain to leak out sooner or later.

Immediately after dinner Hugh went off to spend the afternoon fishing with Vivien Eady and Harpur. Stott sent a message by him that he was bringing Mrs. Hyde to call on Mrs. Eady about tea-time.

From the open window where she and Stott sat over their coffee and tobacco Mrs. Hyde watched Hugh go down the garden and through the white gate. Evidently for the boy this was the best of all possible worlds, and Mrs. Hyde sympathetically understood Stott's reluctance to risk spoiling the perfect confidence between himself and his adopted son, particularly now at the latter's most susceptible age. Still, she thought, the risk ought to be taken.

"To anybody who has seen Rutherford Lorraine, that boy's face is a grave reflection upon the virtue of the late Mrs. Stott, Humphrey," she said drily.

Stott smoked in silence for a few minutes.

"Oh, people don't notice," he said shortly, but rather, as she observed, to reassure himself.

"How about the parson?" she asked.

Stott laughed and retorted—

"Then why hasn't he said so?"

"Now that," said Mrs. Hyde, looking interested, "is rather a curious point in psychology, but I think it can easily be explained. At the back of his head he recognises the resemblance, but because he wants to believe something more to your discredit the recognition remains for the present subconscious. But one of these days when he is not thinking about you the likeness and what it implies will fairly jump at him."

"Ingenious," said Stott, removing his pipe from his lips.

"Oh," said Mrs. Hyde, with an impatient shrug of the shoulders, "do you think everybody's a fool but yourself, Humphrey Stott? By the way," she added, "I can't imagine why you were so indiscreet as to keep Mrs. Lorraine's photograph and stick it up where everybody can see it."

"Merely 'corroborative detail to give artistic

versimilitude, etc. etc.' " quoted Stott, with a smile. " I admit," he said, " that it was unfortunate that Marlow saw the locket, but, anyhow, it will only puzzle him."

" Well," said Mrs. Hyde in despair, " it's bound to come out sooner or later, and you're doing the boy an injustice by not telling him yourself."

Stott looked at her suspiciously.

" If you tell him," he said slowly, " I'll never forgive you."

" Oh, I shan't tell him," she said.

" Nor anybody else," he persisted.

" All right, if you will have it so," she agreed, with a sigh. " But you must remember," she continued, " it isn't as if nobody knew but ourselves."

" The people who do know are scarcely worth considering," he said. " All the old acquaintances have died a natural death, and I never go to London."

" The world isn't so big as one is apt to suppose," she objected; " remember how nearly I gave you away in the Gallery—and 'pon my soul I wish I had," she added viciously. " And then," she continued, with a trace of embarrassment, " besides accidental meetings you've got to consider those persons of your present acquaintance who may have a motive in prying into your past history."

"What do you mean?" he said, looking at her gravely.

She hadn't the courage to speak explicitly, though she more than half believed that he knew whom she was hinting at.

"Well, there's Mr. Marlow," she said.

Stott moved impatiently.

"I wonder what it is in human nature that resents a man going his own way," he said bitterly. "Nothing seems to upset these obsolete people, with their silly fetiches and uneasy little lives, so much as another man's contentment. Because I don't want the things that they want they can't let me alone."

"People don't like to be reminded that they are obsolete," she said drily; "but, anyhow, they couldn't hurt you unless you gave them an opening."

"I know that," he said savagely; "and it's because at the bottom of my mind I know that I'm afraid of them that they exasperate me. It's fear, I suppose, that makes me intolerant and overbearing. I really believe that all the evil in the world comes from fear. But if you only knew what the boy means to me," he said unsteadily, "you wouldn't be surprised at my cowardice."

"If I only knew!" she said, with a half sad and half whimsical glance at him.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Polly; I'm a clumsy fool," he said, touching her hand. "But, anyhow, that was rather different. You never had to face the risk of turning your child from you. I'd rather suffer your loss than that."

"No, you wouldn't," she said bluntly, though her eyes moistened. "And I don't say it because I'm a woman. My husband would have told you the same. Besides," she continued, clearing her throat, "Hugh wouldn't turn from you. That's a superstition. I'm not going to pretend that it wouldn't upset him a great deal to learn that you are not his father,—and mind you, the longer you put it off, the bigger the upset,—but it wouldn't destroy his affection. However, it isn't so much the effect upon Hugh I'm considering now. You know, Humphrey, putting Hugh and all the obsolete people on one side, it does jar you horribly to feel that your peace of mind depends on a fallacy which may be exploded at any moment. It isn't like you to accept anything at the cost of suppressing the truth. At present your greatest fear is that Hugh will find out the truth. Have you ever considered that there may come a time when you'll have to face, not the risk of his finding out, but the temptation to tell him yourself?"

"What do you mean?" he asked, with a side glance at her.

"How old are you, Humphrey—thirty-eight? Well, life isn't lived at thirty-eight."

She watched him closely, and was convinced that he understood. But he did not speak.

"At present," she continued, "Hugh and your hobbies are all the world to you."

"Aren't they enough?" he asked, with an awkward laugh.

"There are women in the world."

He reddened slightly, but said with an affectation of indifference—

"I wouldn't allow any woman to come between us."

"There's no need," she retorted. "Indeed, it might be as much on Hugh's account as your own that you thought of taking a wife. So far, I'll admit, Hugh is a splendid vindication of your ability to bring up a boy. But still, you know, women weren't made merely to bring children into the world, and there are certain advantages which an unmothered boy is bound to miss as he grows up. You've got to consider the future, and apparently you already recognise that the comparative isolation which suits you well enough isn't altogether satisfactory for Hugh."

"Oh, I'll admit all that," he said, ignoring her innuendo; "but I've met very few women that I would trust to bring up a kitten, much

less a high-spirited boy like Hugh. Oh, don't misunderstand me," he said, seeing her open her eyes satirically; "I'm not by any means a misogynist. I believe that when a woman bears a child, whatever her intelligence, sheer instinct guides her to bring it up more or less in the right way. But it needs a very special sort of woman to undertake the care of another woman's child."

"Well, supposing the very special sort of woman turned up?"

He laughed uneasily.

"I suppose it sounds banal for any man old or young to assert that he's case-hardened," he said, "so, for the sake of argument, supposing I fell in love with a woman, it would be extremely unlikely that she would be the sort of woman that would boggle at Hugh."

"Not as Hugh."

"Well, then, as my son. Women have loved widowers before now," he said rather defiantly.

"Oh, Humphrey Stott, Humphrey Stott!" she thought, but all she said was the obvious—

"But you're not a widower."

"No," he admitted, "but your hypothetical. She wouldn't be supposed to know that."

"Under circumstances she might not be satisfied," she retorted. "Suppose, for the sake of argument, that she accepted Hugh as

your son, but was led by your gossiping friends to believe that you—as the saying is—hadn't come by him honestly ? ”

He looked at her quickly, with a lighted match in his hand, and then dropped his eyes with a smile.

“ The woman—I honoured—with my affection,” he said between the puffs as he lighted his pipe, “ would have to accept me unquestioningly ” ; and he flung the match out of the window.

“ H'm ! ” she said.

“ But, seriously,” he continued, “ no nice woman who cared for a man would go prying into his past history.”

As he said it, it sounded as much a question as a statement, thought Mrs. Hyde, and this emboldened her to say—

“ No, but it might be done for her.”

“ By whom ? ” he asked.

“ By somebody who had a motive in prejudicing her against you,” she said meaningly.

Stott sat for a few minutes with his hands folded, looking down at the floor. “ Come outside,” he said, rising from his chair ; “ we're getting futile.”

On the whole, Mrs. Hyde was not dissatisfied. She felt pretty certain that the possibility of having to choose between a woman's love and

keeping Hugh in ignorance of his parentage had already occurred to him. But Stott's remark that the woman he honoured with his affection would have to accept him unquestioningly, though jestingly made, reminded her of a trait in his character which must be reckoned with. He was very proud, and proud of his pride, and the effect of the unpleasant gossip and curiosity, not to speak of the petty persecution of his neighbours, was to drive him farther into himself and harden his defects. Even supposing he felt for any woman a passion strong enough to overcome his fear of telling Hugh the truth, the least hint that she required him to explain would shut his mouth altogether. Pride would drive him to disregard other things besides the dictates of common sense.

Indeed, as they walked down through the Rosemoran Valley, Mrs. Hyde noticed that in spite of Stott's indifference to his neighbours he seemed rather in the mood to look out for provocation. He glanced keenly about the fields and gardens with the air of a man prepared to discover some fresh injury, and he spoke with unnecessary roughness to one of his men for some apparently trivial neglect of duty.

"Oh yes, I'm doing pretty well," he said in answer to Mrs. Hyde's question about the farm.

"I'm not losing money, anyhow. I suppose, like the rest of them, you think I've got a bee in my bonnet. They can't understand that I've no ulterior purpose beyond getting my living in the way that pleases me best, or at least that I don't claim to have one. It's a funny thing how few people will admit that they are pleasing themselves. They'll give any reason for doing a thing but the right one; because it is good for them, or for the rest of the world; because they are compelled to, or because it is their duty. I mistrust the man who explains that the glass of beer he drinks is for the good of his health."

"Don't you ever regret Fleet Street?" asked Mrs. Hyde presently.

"Not a bit," he said. "Why should I? Of course at one time, like other young men, I believed that it is a fine thing to express one's ideas in print. I still think so—if one is obeying an impulse. That is the only sort of writing that matters. It's no good battering oneself into a belief in one's subject, however lofty it may seem. But the conditions of Fleet Street are not conducive to following one's impulses. I don't write now — except occasionally on purely technical subjects connected with gardening, and so on—but if I wanted to write I could do so just as well down here as in London. Better, perhaps."

He was silent for some time, and Mrs. Hyde thought that possibly he was reluctant to pay their intended call.

"I'm not boring you by asking you to take me to see Mrs. Eady?" she said.

"Oh no; not at all," he answered hastily. "I like Mrs. Eady extremely. Miss Eady is—well, difficult. I don't mean that she's not sincere, but that she doesn't seem to know her own mind. I thought we were beginning to understand one another pretty well—that we were going to be friends; but all at once she seems to have frozen up somehow."

"She's very young," pleaded Mrs. Hyde.

"Yes," he said, with an odd sort of smile; "but it's about time she made up her mind about things, since she's going to be married next year."

"Don't you think she cares enough for Harpur?" said Mrs. Hyde, pressing him.

"Yes—with her brain. I'm not so sure about her instincts, and since probably her whole training has been the suppression of her instincts she's naturally afraid of them. I guess that she's finding out that she cares for quite a lot of things that Harpur doesn't, if he doesn't actually disapprove of them—or think he ought to, which for a man of his temperament amounts to the same thing. However," he said, "it's not my

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business, anyhow. She seems to get on very well with Hugh, which is the great thing so far as I'm concerned."

"Much greater than you think," was Mrs. Hyde's inward comment, but she said nothing aloud.

CHAPTER XIII

"Now, Miss Eady, chuck in there; no, not in the rough, white water—just at the edge of the current, where it's brown and quiet. That's better. At this time of year the trout are not strong enough to face the heavy water, and you'll always find them in the eddies or under the bank. But you mustn't thrash like that. Let the rod do the work. One, two; one, two—so. Oh, hard lines! Never mind; I'll get it loose for you."

Hot and giddy, with dishevelled hair and clammy hands, Vivien gingerly stepped down from her uncertain perch upon a swaying stone and gave her rod to Hugh. She watched his lean brown fingers deftly plucking at the apparently hopeless tangle of almost invisible gut cast, which was the only result of her first lesson in throwing a fly.

They were fishing down in the Cove, where the stream after a broken descent over rocks in a series of white cascades and troubled pools

ran swiftly in a deep channel, and broadened among the boulders before its final plunge into the sea. There was rather more wind than was convenient, and the tall cliffs at the valley's mouth complicated its direction, so that it seemed to blow half a dozen ways within ten minutes. The turmoil of the sea, so startlingly near, was in itself disconcerting. There was a feeling of wildness and loneliness coupled with an intimation of hostility on the part of the elements. It was as if one attempted the trout in defiance of powerful genii, and Vivien was possessed with the sense of daring and wrong-doing.

At some little distance from the stream Selwyn Harpur sat on a boulder smoking a cigarette. His expression as he watched the pair was not so appreciative as it ought to have been. Vivien in her short grey dress and dark red tam-o'-shanter was a pleasant enough figure for any lover. Her two months at Penolver had not only improved her health, but had removed her slight look of hardness and self-consciousness. Her eyes were deeper in expression; her movements more impulsive and yet more graceful. With new surroundings, her personality had developed, bringing to light unexpected qualities of tenderness and humour, which one might have supposed would have delighted the man she was engaged to marry. But it was exactly

the unexpected that Harpur disapproved. He wanted Vivien, perhaps, less as herself than as he was trying to make her. The increasing intimacy between Vivien and Hugh Stott caused him a good deal of embarrassment. The more he heard about Stott the more he distrusted him; but he was too just, and too much attracted by Hugh, to visit upon him the dislike he felt for his father. Still, he could not help feeling that Vivien was rather tactless. She might have been kind to the boy without going out of her way to cultivate his acquaintance. He had hinted as much to her, but her look of blank astonishment had made him afraid to pursue the subject further. Since the Oglanders' luncheon party Harpur's vague suspicion of Stott had narrowed down to something more definite. Mr. Marlow's contribution to the history of the Lorraine episode pointed to something shady in Stott's past relation with women. Mrs. Hyde's defence of Stott did nothing to lessen Harpur's anxiety: she was herself of a type he instinctively disliked. In justice to Harpur, it must be said that his feeling in the matter was not altogether personal. If Vivien had been his sister, he would still have objected to her association with people who represented ideas and ways of living entirely outside his sympathy. Usually frank and at his ease in

the society of boys, with Hugh Stott he felt awkward and restrained, and this irritated him.

"Now have another try," said Hugh, handing the rod back to Vivien. "When you're casting never throw your rod back more than an angle of forty-five degrees. Watch your line as it shoots out, and when it touches the water lower the point of your rod and follow the line down-stream. That's better—but use your wrist more; hold firmly but with a free wrist—strike!"

Vivien made a complicated upward movement, and her line held taut, but there was no give at the end of it.

"Bottom," said Hugh laconically. "I'll free it."

He clambered catlike over the stones, turned up his sleeve, and, kneeling down, groped among the roots of the flags which surrounded the pool.

"It's no use fishing this pool any more now," he said, as he dried his skinny arm with a very dirty pocket-handkerchief. "I've frightened away every trout within a mile. We'll try higher up—just above the bridge. Keep down as you get near the water."

They crept like Indians up the stream, and, sheltered by a wall, Vivien made another cast. This time her line dropped fairly into the slack water under the farther bank.

"Now, watch your line," said Hugh excitedly, "and the moment it stops or steals away—now!"

This time Vivien's nervous jerk was answered by a yielding pull, followed by a succession of violent throbs.

"Hold him, hold him—I say, he's a whopper!" cried Hugh, as the fish, whitely visible under the surface of the water, darted frantically this way and that, seeking cover. With her slender rod bent and quivering, Vivien slowly reeled in her line. She was trembling with excitement, her eyes were fierce and eager, and her heart beat violently. If the fish had escaped her now, she would have sat down and cried.

"Now, heave him out," said Hugh.

Landing-nets are a superfluity on most Cornish streams, where a "whopper" seldom exceeds half a pound. Vivien's first catch was a little under. She flung down her rod and dropped on her knees beside the gleaming trout, which flapped convulsively with that peculiar somersaulting movement a landed fish makes towards water.

"You must kill it," she said.

"All right—look the other way, if you don't want to see."

Hugh wiped a gory thumb on his knickerbockers, and held up the now limp trout as

Harpur, with his hands in his pockets, sauntered towards them.

"Quite a decent fish," he said patronisingly. "Doesn't it seem a shame to kill anything so beautiful?"

The remark rang false, and Vivien saw that Hugh noticed it. He looked up quickly under his dark brows, a curious trick he had, and opened his mouth as if to argue, but thought better of it.

"You have a try, sir," he said politely.

"Oh no, thanks; I'd rather watch you," said Harpur.

Something in his tone made Vivien suspect that he did not care to expose his lack of skill. Hugh asked him a question or two, and Harpur's answers convinced Vivien that he knew nothing whatever about fishing. Hugh at first looked puzzled, and then ashamed. He blushed and stammered, and hastily changed the subject. Afterwards, Vivien noticed, he was very scrupulously polite to Harpur, and more than once she caught him looking at him thoughtfully. She was deeply vexed. Why need Harpur be ashamed to admit his ignorance of trout-fishing? The matter was so absurdly trivial, in any case. She had occasionally noticed a want of absolute honesty about small things in Harpur's conversation, but she had been inclined to regard

this as due to his preoccupation with ideas above the heads of his company. But there was no need to evade a boy so intelligent as Hugh Stott. She could see that for Hugh the idol was already cracked. Her affection for Harpur was so much a matter of respect that the trivial incident made her feel quite unhappy.

There was no time to brood over it then, however, for Hugh was eager to get to work again. They clambered from pool to pool, where the stream came down over the rocks. Half the joy of fishing a Cornish stream is in the scrambling and the surprises in animal and plant life that lurk round every corner. The keen use of hand and eye, the sense of brain and body working together, gave to Vivien the blessed relief which a nature inclined to be introspective derives from the exercise of untried faculties. As Vivien climbed and pushed and panted after Hugh her vexation with Harpur wore off, and she was inwardly amused at the incredible picture he had hinted, under Hugh's cross-examination, of himself following a trout-stream with a rod in one hand and a volume of the classics in the other. Her own luck was not followed up, and she caught no more fish, but she got the keenest pleasure from watching Hugh. His apparently preternatural instinct for likely places, his crafty approach and dex-

terity in throwing a fly where it looked impossible even to thrust his rod, filled her with admiration.

When they came to the ash grove, where in places the stream was almost concealed by brambles, Hugh put on a worm instead of a fly. Harpur affected to be scandalised, and the boy, a little hurt by the word "unsportsmanlike," tried to explain that under the conditions it was foolish to use any other method. To illustrate his meaning, he said—

"My father says that in fishing, like everything else, the first rule is that there is no rule."

Vivien unconsciously glanced at Harpur and caught his eye, and was sorry for it. The boy's innocent remark struck deep into Harpur's life, she thought. Out of the mouths of children she was learning her lover's defects. He approached everything with ready-made principles out of books. She remembered Stott's blunt saying, "You've got to begin with the stuff and work out your ideals from that."

Yes, that was true from education down to trout-fishing. She wondered what she should do if as Harpur's wife she were compelled to witness some serious evil growing out of his arbitrary disregard for the character of one of his boys. He had the reputation of being a remarkably good schoolmaster, but now it seemed incredible

to her that he did not often make grave mistakes. If Hugh Stott, for example, were under his care, it was nearly certain that he would treat him the wrong way. Thinking about that frightened her. Until now, next year had seemed so far off that she had not recognised that almost immediately she would be called upon to use her judgment for the welfare of a number of boys. What a deal there was in boyhood that could only be learned by the patient observation of every kind of boy! Theories were no use; even experience was little help unless one kept a perfectly open mind. What was it Stott had said?

"It doesn't matter how you educate the ordinary boy, so long as you feed him well, give him plenty of other boys to play with, and don't interfere with him too much."

Certainly that was not Harpur's way. She was astonished how well she remembered Stott's words: it was as if he spoke them now in her ear. She called up a picture of Stott's grave, considering eyes and smiling lips as he made the remark. It was not as if he were conscious of saying something clever, but as if he had thought over the matter for so long that the words came readily to his lips as a commonplace. Stott, she thought, had been studying and considering life while she and Harpur were

spinning theories out of books which she, at least, only half believed in.

She was roused from her reverie by Hugh asking her if she were tired. She coloured and hastily said "No," but Harpur, looking at his watch, reminded her that Mrs. Hyde was coming to tea.

At the cottage they found not only Mrs. Hyde and Stott, but the Marlows, who had driven over, bringing Mrs. Fleming with them. Mrs. Eady looked up with an almost ludicrous air of relief when Vivien came in, and for once the girl sympathised with her mother. She was beginning to feel that ordinary people were worth more consideration than she had yet given them.

Harpur would have preferred to meet Mrs. Fleming anywhere but under the sharp eyes of Mrs. Hyde. He had nothing to reproach himself with in regard to Mrs. Fleming, but he had perhaps submitted too complaisantly to her curious flattery.

Somebody had once called Mrs. Fleming a pretty fool, and ever afterwards it amused her to look and dress the part. The correctness of the adjective was obvious at a glance, and one had to suffer from her tongue to recognise how misleading was her generally fatuous air. Her loose brown hair was dressed low over her very full, bored-looking blue eyes, that were always

moist; her chin receded slightly, and she spoke in a drawling voice. Her clothes hung upon her with the artful negligence that men suppose to be accidental: with her sloping shoulders and the flowing spread of her skirts she looked oddly Early Victorian.

Her greeting to Harpur was maliciously implicating. She turned away her head and sucked in her lower lip as she passively gave him her hand with the fingers held straight. Mrs. Hyde's mouth grew grimmer to conceal her satisfaction. She fancied that she saw God's purpose in Mrs. Fleming, though Harpur's "How do you do, Mrs. Fleming?" was innocently cordial.

Mrs. Fleming slowly pressed Vivien's hand in a way that was congratulatory and yet subtly compassionate.

"I've been so anxious to meet you, Miss Eady," she said, with her eyes fixed on the ground. "Mr. Harpur has told me such a lot about you. How tall and happy you look!"

She sighed, and when she dropped Vivien's hand the bracelets on her own delicate wrist clashed together, leaving the impression that she wore fetters.

Vivien felt that she was not jealous of Mrs. Fleming, though she instinctively disliked her. She was sufficiently unused to feeling or looking tomboyish not to mind the other woman's curious

glance at her rumpled hair. When she left the room to wash her hands at the kitchen sink, Mrs. Fleming contrived that she should catch her quizzical glance at Harpur.

Mrs. Fleming murmured over Hugh with sly amusement at his embarrassed wriggle.

"Wouldn't you like to kiss me, Hugh?" she asked faintly, as she held his dirty hand between her two.

Hugh growled and broke away to sit beside Mrs. Marlow, whose thin cheeks flushed prettily at his approach. Mrs. Marlow's perfectly cut tailor-made dress was in itself a protest against her sister-in-law's insolent negligence of attire.

"Well, dear," she said to Hugh, "did you have good sport?"

"Pretty fair," said he. "Miss Eady got the best fish."

"My papa was a great fisherman in his younger days," said Mrs. Marlow encouragingly: "it was not then considered derogatory to a clergyman's position to indulge in field sports."

"It must be so interesting to see a fish die," said Mrs. Fleming from the other side of the room. "It's years since I saw anything killed," she added regretfully.

"Death, whether of a fish or a fellow-creature, must always give rise to serious reflections," said Mr. Marlow, with a provocative glance at

Harpur. He had looked forward with voluptuous eagerness to this meeting of intellect with intellect.

"What rot, Gus!" said his sister faintly. "It was the wriggle I was thinking about. Don't you remember how you fought me away from the hole in the door when we got up at five o'clock in the morning to see Hawkins kill a pig?"

Mrs. Marlow winced, but said nothing. When Gus's sister visited St. Adrian, Mrs. Marlow's whole existence was a rally to the banner of gentility.

As Vivien attended to the tea-things she observed that Stott was rather on his guard against Mrs. Fleming. They had met before, she knew, and she had gathered that Stott rather liked her. Indeed, his casual references to Mrs. Fleming indicated a sort of alliance, as if they laughed at the same things and the same people.

To-day, however, Stott eyed Mrs. Fleming apprehensively. She took little notice of him, but seemed extraordinarily interested in Hugh. It was evident that from old acquaintance Hugh hated her, but she played him so tactfully that against his will he became communicative. It was obvious that there was an intention in her monopoly of the boy, but even Mrs. Hyde, grimly silent, could not follow the deep windings of Mrs. Fleming's intelligence. She recognised,

however, that granting that Stott had something to hide, of all the persons of his acquaintance he had most reason to fear Mrs. Fleming.

"Although I live quite close to your school," Mrs. Fleming said to Hugh, "you've never asked me to come to see you."

"Oh, I ~~didn't~~ think you'd care," said Hugh, opening his eyes; "there's nothing to see in a school."

"But the other fellows ask their sisters and cousins sometimes, don't they?"

"Yes, sometimes, for cricket matches and things," he said; "but you're not my sister or my cousin," he added cheekily.

"Little egoist!"

"What's an egoist?" asked Hugh.

"It depends on what he won't do for you."

"Now you're rotting," said Hugh, with an uneasy glance at her.

"No, I'm not—you ask your father. Anyhow, let's pretend I'm your cousin. I adore cricket matches, and perhaps you'll be nice enough to come to tea with me sometimes. Mr. Stott, we've discovered a relationship; will you trust Hugh to come to tea with me?"

"All right, Mrs. Fleming," said Stott rather stiffly; and Vivien observed that though he was talking to her mother he had listened to every word that Mrs. Fleming said to Hugh.

"Miss Eady, I wish you'd tell me the secret of your power over men and boys," said Mrs. Fleming, looking up ingenuously, as Vivien offered her something to eat. "I squander myself, and only get a grunt, while you have merely to smile and they are at your feet. No, thank you; I never eat bread-and-butter: I'll have one of those unwholesome-looking little cakes. Has my brother asked you yet about the Tendencies of the Modern Drama?" she said, turning to Mrs. Hyde. "I don't often go to theatres, but I love music halls when I can get a man to take me. But men are all so horribly respectable nowadays. All the interesting vicious people are dead. Somebody ought to write a poem after the manner of Hood's 'Midsummer Fairies'—'The Last of the Degenerates,'—don't you know, asking somebody to come and sin with him."

That reminded Mr. Marlow of a book, and gave him his opportunity. Not so long ago Vivien would have been delighted to sit listening to the discussion which followed, but now it all sounded rather flimsy and shallow. It served, however, to show her that Mrs. Fleming's impertinences were only a veil to sound taste in books and considerable knowledge of subjects ordinarily the field of special scholarship. More than once she corrected Harpur, as a bored

professional might correct an enthusiastic amateur. The book they were talking about was one of Biblical criticism. Harpur, by the way, had not taken orders, for reasons which the highest authorities admitted did him nothing but credit. His fine scruples, they said, honoured himself and the Articles which he could not accept.

"Well, Miss Eady," said Mrs. Hyde rather tartly, when she rose to go, "I hope you'll go on deriving benefit from the Cornish air. Your mother has been telling me how much better you are, and I can quite believe it. But there's all the difference between better and quite well, isn't there? Good-bye, and don't forget to let me know when you are going to Paris."

"Oh, are you going to Paris?" said Mrs. Fleming. "Don't let Mr. Harpur shirk his duty. There are all sorts of delightfully corrupt little places you ought to see."

When the Marlows took their leave, Vivien and Harpur walked with them as far as the inn, where they had left their pony-carriage. Mrs. Fleming saying, "I want to talk to Miss Eady," hooked her arm through Vivien's, and hung upon her, so that they lagged behind.

"You're not a bit like what I expected," said Mrs. Fleming. "From what I know of Mr. Harpur, I was afraid you'd be a blue-stock-

ing. I hope you'll be able to make Selwyn—you don't mind me calling him Selwyn, do you? it's such a bother to remember his other name—more human. My husband had the greatest admiration for him. But, of course, like all clever young men, he's rather crude and self-opinionated. You see, at my husband's house I saw it all," she added vaguely, "and a lot of it's just humbug. My husband was a great scholar, you know, really great, I mean, and you should have heard him laugh at some of the books and the men that the world takes quite seriously. I suppose Selwyn is making you swot horribly? Such a funny idea, isn't it? that a man and a woman can love each other with their brains. It rather suggests that God doesn't know His own business, doesn't it? Well, there won't be any need to bother your brains about books when you're married."

CHAPTER XIV

WHILE Harpur was at lunch Mrs. Prowse ushered in the odd boy of uncertain age from St. Adrian Rectory, who with every circumstance of discretion produced a dirty note from his pocket.

"There is no answer," he said, anticipating Harpur's "Wait a minute," and clutching his cap with both hands he backed to the door, muttering aggrievedly—

"She said I was not to wait for an answer ; she said I was not to wait for an answer."

Harpur read his note, and said, "All right" to the boy, who bolted like a rabbit from the house.

"I shall be alone this afternoon from three to six. Can't you come in for a chat ?—E. F." was the message, not a little disturbing to a person of Harpur's exemplary honesty. He was quite sure that he had never given Elsie Fleming any reason to misunderstand his liking for her, but he felt that he would not have any peace of mind until he had learned what she

wanted. That she did want to see him privately was quite evident from the form of the note and the cunning manner of its transmission, which had been intended to deprive him of the opportunity to send an excuse. He and Vivien had met Mrs. Fleming only the day before yesterday, when he had tried to get her to talk about Stott. She had seemed reluctant to do so, thus whetting his curiosity, since he supposed that she held her tongue out of consideration for Vivien's innocence.

Unused to anything in the shape of intrigue, Harpur took elaborate precautions to indulge Mrs. Fleming's presumable wish for secrecy. From one o'clock till a quarter to three John the postman with the unruly feet dined and slumbered at the Penolver Inn. At a quarter to three precisely he cleared the letter box in the wall of the inn, and once more allowed his importunate members to carry him back to Porthlew by a shorter route than that he came. Between his departure and his dawdling rearrival on the morrow there was no official means of communication between Penolver Cove and Porthlew Post Office—and hence the world. But if a Penolver person with a letter to post missed John by anything less than half an hour, he was able by hurrying three miles to St. Adrian to catch a later post which, being carried to

Porthlew by cart, served the same outward mail for which John collected letters.

Scrupulously exact in his mild deception, Harpur wrote a letter of some importance, and carefully missed the postman by about ten minutes. Thus he could walk to St. Adrian with a clear conscience, and at a pace which made his wish to walk alone seem only natural. He had to pass the Rectory gates to reach the St. Adrian Post Office, but it never occurred to him to delay fulfilling his advertised purpose. If he had not hurried to catch the post he would have felt that he had acted a lie.

He found Mrs. Fleming sitting over the fire in her brother's study. Though the day was heavenly mild, both windows were shut. She was surrounded by uninteresting-looking books, which had evidently been irritably glanced at and flung aside.

Selwyn Harpur was not vain of his attraction for women, but it could not be denied that he was a little disconcerted by Mrs. Fleming's reception of him. Whatever impression she tried to convey in public, it was obvious that she wished for no illusions between themselves. At some time in her discontented life she might have cared for him a little, but to-day he was merely a friend, and, her eyes warned him, a friend exposed to all the candid criticism of friendship. Oddly,

too, as Harpur sat down on the other side of the hearth, he recognised as if for the first time that apart from her talent for delicate flattery Elsie Fleming had a singular charm of her own.

At Oxford there had been extraordinary stories about her. Callow undergraduates flushed with wine and morbid literature whispered that she was an ether-drinker, a morphinomaniac, a Satanist. She cultivated and dropped a succession of queer people and queerer religions. Harpur, who since taking his degree had become one of her husband's few intimate friends, knew her for a clever woman whose frail body was wasted by her feverish intelligence. She was unhappy by temperament, her analytical brain destroying her pleasure in everything which at first seemed to interest her. Whatever the degree of her affection for her grave elderly husband, she had been always, as Harpur knew, the most loyal comrade—an invaluable help to him in the selection of men and books. She had a quick eye for humbug and insincerity, a marvellous instinct for the essentials of whatever she read.

Looking at her slim, long-waisted figure lost in the deep arm-chair, Harpur saw that she was more than usually excited. Her eyes were feverishly bright, her lips dry, and her low, lisping voice was unpleasantly harsh and abrupt.

For a little while they talked about things of no consequence, she moving irritably in her chair and yawning, while he wondered why she had sent for him. At last she said—

“I’m glad you came. I want to talk about our neighbours—or one of them.”

His mind supplied the name, and his manner stiffened. She noticed it with a quick glance and a smile.

“Yes; I want to talk to you about Mr. Stott,” she said. “It seems to be the fashion to talk about Mr. Stott,” she added, with an uneasy laugh.

“So I’ve observed, to my cost,” he said in the tone of one heartily tired of the subject.

“That’s not quite sincere, Selwyn, is it?” she said, looking up at him. “However, I’m going to talk about Mr. Stott with more justice than most people. By the way, what do you make of him?”

“Frankly, I’m not attracted,” he said.

“No, you wouldn’t be; that goes without saying,” she said snappishly. “With all your talents you’re a man of yesterday, while Stott is a man of the day after to-morrow. But, putting aside the Dr. Fell feeling, temperament, and all that, what precisely do you suspect?”

“From what one has heard,” said Harpur judicially, “and that bother about the inquest,

with your brother's contribution, I should say a woman—or women."

"Only one woman, Selwyn," she said ironically, "and she's dead, and, if what the parsons say is right, on the credit side for Stott in the Big Book. She was the other man's wife."

"I expected something of the sort," he said, and his expression told her that he still reserved his opinion of Stott's virtue.

"Yes, I know what you think," she said mercilessly. "You think that I'm judging him by an unconventional standard of my own. But just wait till I've finished." And she told him the story of Hugh's adoption. Harpur listened intently, and did not look so pleased as might have been expected of a man hearing another's character vindicated. That she did not rally him on his want of generosity was proof that her mind was preoccupied with other things.

"How did you find this out?" he asked, when she had finished.

"Quite easily," she said. "I suppose my brother told you about the extraordinary likeness he noticed between the man Lorraine and Hugh Stott?"

She looked very surprised when Harpur said "No," and she went on—

"Well, you see, that rather complicated the conclusion one might naturally have jumped at

from the two portraits. It set me thinking, and I determined to find out the truth. Lorraine was not difficult to trace. He was, as one supposed, an unmitigated sweep, though a man of some talent. I've got his book of verses somewhere, if you'd care to read it: the ingenious nastiness of a man who mistook prurience for poetic inspiration, but sincerely expressed for all that. Perhaps because of it, and therefore interesting pathologically. But that's neither here nor there. I know a man who knows a man who was on the same newspaper with Stott. I wrote to him, and this morning I got a letter telling me what I have told you."

She spoke rather defiantly, and just for a moment Harpur wondered why she had taken all that trouble. She did not usually bother her head about clearing other people's characters.

"It seems rather unnecessary for Stott to make all this mystery," he objected.

"Ah," she said, "now we're coming to the most interesting part of the whole story and the reason why I wanted to tell you this in private. I'm quite certain that Stott's only motive for secrecy is to keep the boy from finding out that he's not his son."

"But if you know a man who knows a man——"

"Oh, I'm not defending Stott's intelligence or judgment," she said. "When one loves

anything or anybody very much, intelligence and judgment go to the wall. Indeed," she continued, with an ironical change in her voice, "I should be inclined to measure a person's affection by the lack of judgment he showed in it. I've no doubt that the story is an open secret with several people in London. I'm quite sure that Mrs. Hyde knows, for example. Personally, I believe that Stott is running a greater risk of harming the boy by keeping him in ignorance than if he told him. But love seldom sees the best interests of the object loved."

"I'm prepared to dispute that," he said. "It would be an excellent subject for a *Court d'Amour*. However, it seems to me making a mountain out of a molehill in this case. I don't suppose that if Hugh were told tactfully it would make much difference one way or another."

"One never knows," she said, with a little, sad laugh. "Such trivial things make all the difference." She was silent for a little while, and then continued, with sudden vehemence—

"You can have no conception of Stott's passion for that child. He would sacrifice anything or anybody to it. You can only hurt him, only reach him, through the boy. It is something almost monstrous."

Her whole body vibrated with the energy of

her words, and she coloured under Harpur's interested eyes.

"All this is between ourselves," she said, bending forward to stir the fire.

"You haven't told your brother, then?" he asked.

"Heaven forbid!" she exclaimed, with a bitter laugh, "if only for the cynical pleasure of seeing what unpleasant monster he makes out of what he knows already. I told you because—well, because you are you." She looked down at the fire, and continued in a lower voice, "I felt sure that however much you disliked Mr. Stott you would not wish to be unjust to him, and," she looked up again, "I know you are discreet."

"I'm very glad you told me," he said, with an attempt to seem cordial, "and of course I shall not repeat it to anybody."

Her explanation of her reason for telling him the story, though flattering to his self-esteem, was not satisfactory, he felt, but he recognised that it was the only one she intended to make.

"You see," she continued, still playing with the fire, "whatever one may think of Stott's discretion, having stumbled on his secret by accident one ought to respect it."

"Oh, I quite agree with you," he murmured.

She hesitated for a moment, and then said—

"Forgive me, Selwyn—but not excepting even Miss Eady? I feel sure that Mr. Stott would prefer to continue being misunderstood by—anybody—rather than risk the story coming round to the boy. Of course I know that Miss Eady wouldn't gossip, but she is so intimate with Hugh——"

"You need have no fear," he assured her; "I shan't tell Vivien."

"No," she thought, "there's no risk of that!" She turned her head away so that he did not see the bitter smile which distorted her lips.

He was very puzzled by her manner. It was quite plain to him that he had declined in her interest to the merest friendship, and yet she seemed at intervals to wish to assume a more sentimental feeling. She assumed it so badly, however, as almost to insult his intelligence. Her manner reminded him of rouge badly put on.

"Guess why I came down here?" she said, laying her hand on his arm with an attempt at coquetry deplorable in her. From sheer embarrassment, he indulged her mood.

"Am I to dare——" he began.

"No, you're wrong," she said, with a rather high-pitched laugh. "It was curiosity to see Miss Eady. I congratulate you with all my heart, Selwyn, but you'll have to be careful with her."

He spoke lightly of the indisposition which had sent Vivien to Cornwall.

"I don't mean that," she said rather petulantly. "May I be quite frank, Selwyn?"

"Oh, surely," he said, wondering apprehensively what she was going to say.

"Well, she isn't head-over-ears in love with you, you know. I'm sure she cares for you a great deal, but—well, not in the way poets write about."

"I shan't worry about that," he said, with a laugh.

"I should say it is chiefly respect for your character and the rest gratitude," she went on thoughtfully.

"Very flattering to my self-esteem," he said, colouring; "I'm more than satisfied."

"Oh, in that sense I don't know the woman good enough for you, Selwyn," she murmured awkwardly; adding, "But if I were a man I'd rather be loved for the shape of my leg or the way I ate mutton."

He looked grave, and said something about the transitoriness of passion.

"Surely," he said, "you are talking paradox? Alasting affection based upon mutual respect——"

"I don't know," she said abstractedly,—"*I don't know.* Of course, if you can be sure of that on both sides—— But, like mathematics,

it is so disastrously dependent on absolute correctness of detail. A slip in a fraction and you're out in the millions, whereas—— When I said you must be careful with her, I meant that you must take care never to injure her respect for you."

"You mean that I must never let her find me out?" he said ironically, and raising his eyebrows.

"Of course I don't mean that you would ever do anything disgraceful," she said rather impatiently; "but—you don't understand women very well, Selwyn. When they really love a man they can overlook a crime, but otherwise they will brood and fret over things so small that a man wouldn't notice them. Miss Eady is the sweetest girl, but how fastidious you don't know. Love is so divine a thing for her that she'll be critical of the least flaw in you. You haven't roused her passions. When once you're married she'll be loyal to you if it kills her, but you're not married yet. If she met anybody else—— Oh, I know those tall, calm, slow-eyed girls when they take fire!"

"My dear Elsie!" he said, aghast.

She laughed nervously and bit her lip.

"I talk wildly," she said. "But see how thoughtful I am for you, Selwyn! I generally go up to town for Easter, instead of which I'm

allowing myself to be bored to death in this impossible place. Really, Gus is the most egregious person on the face of the earth. I can put up with Ellen, because, as Mr. Stott says, she's so obsolete that she's interesting—like an ivy-clad ruin. She's an echo from the past. I wonder some American hasn't collected her—she'd be an immense draw in Chicago as a relic of the old nobility. Won't you stop and have some tea ? ”

The invitation, as he saw, was not pressing, and he excused himself. As he walked back to Penolver and the conversation took shape in his mind, he was not impervious to the irony of the fact that Elsie Fleming had blessed where he expected her to curse. It was true that he did not know much about women, but he could not help feeling that it was a little odd for one woman who had at least flirted with him to advise him so strongly to make sure of the love of another.

CHAPTER XV

STOTT and Hugh rode home in the evening after a canter on the moors. To-morrow Hugh was going back to school. The last few days of Hugh's holidays were always an ordeal for Stott, but this evening for several reasons he felt the approaching separation more keenly than ever. Never before had he so dreaded the idea of loneliness. He was not prone to gloomy forebodings, but now he could not shake off the feeling that both he and Hugh were nearing a crisis in their lives—that they would never again be so happy as they had been in the past. Probably the reason for his depression was an inner sense of disloyalty to Hugh. There is perhaps no more awful experience than the feeling of treachery to a child, and a child's confidence is so exquisitely subtle a thing that it makes little difference whether the betrayal is in act or word or only in desire. For the first time since his adoption of the boy, Stott clearly recognised that their assumed relationship was

a hindrance to the fulfilment of desires perfectly natural and innocent in themselves which were every day becoming more importunate. He had been prepared for complications, for dangers to their affection, but only from the outside. The discovery that their perfect confidence might be sapped from within his own heart was appalling.

Stott's remark to Mrs. Hyde had exactly expressed his belief. He could only think of a woman as coming "between" himself and the boy, and though it never entered his head that there was the least chance of his winning the woman he wanted, the mere fact that he did want her made him hate himself and react with a fiercer tenderness upon Hugh.

"They," he said in his heart, and meaning in effect his own desires, "shan't tear you from me."

As if sympathetically aware of Stott's melancholy mood, Hugh sat his pony listlessly as they rode down through the dusky valley. When they were passing the Eadys' cottage he broke the silence which had lasted for some time between them.

"I suppose the Eadys won't be here when I come down at Midsummer," he said, turning in his saddle to stare at the lighted window.

"No, I think not," said Stott. "Mr. Harpur

breaks up a day or two before you, and probably the Eadys will go up to London beforehand."

Hugh glanced at him curiously. It was rather unusual for Stott to show such definite knowledge of other people's movements.

"Awful rot, I call it, going off to Paris like that," grumbled the boy. "I thought they'd be here for the whole of the Midsummer holidays. And I don't believe Miss Eady wants to go a bit: she'd much rather muck about down here."

"Did she say so?" asked Stott, aware that he was indiscreet, but prompted by an irresistible impulse.

"No, she didn't say so," said Hugh, "but I can tell." He grinned knowingly and pulled at his pony's ears. "Mr. Harpur's all right, and kind, and all that, but he's a bit of a rotter sometimes. We'd a chap once rather like him: he gave out that he was going to take an interest in our hobbies." He sniggered reminiscently. "He didn't stop long. Fellows don't like being taken an interest in, and I expect girls are the same. I lay she's glad to get rid of him for a bit. Anyhow, she's been quite different since he went."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, I dunno," said Hugh. "When Mr. Harpur was here, it was always just as if she'd been told to run about and play. Now she's

more free and easy. If she wants to come out she comes out, and if she don't she says so. That makes it so much easier to get on: you know where you are. And if you do or say anything she doesn't like, she tells you straight. I like Miss Eady," he concluded emphatically; "she isn't so frilly as most girls."

"You ought to have asked her up here sometimes," said Stott.

Hugh seemed uncomfortable; he whistled for a bit, and then blurted out, "I did ask her, pater, but she didn't seem to care to come. She always made some excuse or other. I fancy she's rather scared of you, though I told her that was all rot and that you rather liked her."

Stott did not make any comment, but he jumped to the right conclusion nevertheless. The evening before Harpur went away—now nearly a week ago—he hinted to Vivien in her mother's presence that after Hugh had gone back to school Stott's acquaintance might be gently discouraged. Vivien did not argue, but Mrs. Eady protested with some spirit.

"But why, Selwyn?" she said. "I know there is unpleasant gossip, but we've heard nothing definite against Mr. Stott."

Harpur, irritated as much with himself as with her, passed the narrow line between disparagement and slander.

"There is something definite," he said gravely. "I'm not at liberty to explain, but—well—there was another man's wife, you know."

His embarrassment seemed only natural in one so punctilious about the proprieties, and Mrs. Eady said no more. Vivien thought that she might with justice have retorted—

"Well, people talked about you and Mrs. Fleming."

She recognised that the reason why she didn't was because she was not jealous of Mrs. Fleming. She believed that Mrs. Fleming wanted her to be jealous, but for some reason the right atmosphere seemed to be wanting.

"You do like her, pater, don't you?" said Hugh, afflicted by Stott's silence.

"Oh yes," said Stott, with a laugh; "I think she's a very nice girl."

"I wish they lived here," murmured Hugh.

"You're great pals with Miss Eady, aren't you?" said Stott.

"Rather," said Hugh emphatically; and then he continued, with an anxious glance at Stott, "You don't mind, do you, pater?"

"No, my dear chap," said Stott, touched and made ashamed by the boy's scrupulous loyalty. "I'm very glad for you to have a companion nearer your own age. I've sometimes thought it must be a bit lonely for you down here."

"Oh, it isn't a bit, pater," said Hugh hastily ; "there's always such a lot to do, one way and another."

Since his conversation with Mrs. Hyde, Stott had begun to wonder whether he was acting quite fairly by the boy in denying him practically all society but his own. There were his school-fellows, of course ; but Hugh could not spend all his life at school, and he was now entering upon a period of his life when the right or the wrong conditions would make all the difference. Stott knew that he could not now consider the matter with an unbiassed mind. He fancied that he had already noticed in Hugh a roughness of manner, an absence of little refinements such as might be expected in a boy whose home life, so far as woman's influence was concerned, had been left to servants. And then he cried shame upon himself for truckling with temptation.

There seemed to be a conspiracy of women on the side of his more selfish desires, as if they resented the slight he put upon their sex. At various times both Mrs. Marlow and Mrs. Fleming had hinted that in their opinion he was neglecting his duty in remaining unmarried, though for exactly opposite reasons. Mrs. Marlow felt sure that no man could supply the place of even a stepmother's love, while Mrs. Fleming, who did not care for children, persistently accused him of

spoiling Hugh, though it was evident that her concern was not altogether or even chiefly for the boy.

"It isn't wholesome," she said, "to spend upon a child the sort of love you ought to reserve for a woman. You're not only making him old-mannish, but you are perverting your own nature."

Stott was rather puzzled to account for Mrs. Fleming's sudden friendliness to Hugh on her present visit to St. Adrian, but he supposed it was due to her good-naturedly malicious interest in the gossip about himself.

Mrs. Hyde's veiled remarks had led him despairingly to ask Mrs. Ford whether she could suggest any alteration in their domestic arrangements which might be to Hugh's benefit.

"No, sir," she said; "there's nothing that I can think of," but left the sentence patently unfinished.

"Out with it, Mrs. Ford," he said, with a grim laugh.

"Well, sir," she said, smiling, "as I've always said, I think the house would be better for a mistress."

Stott called her an arrant old sentimentalist, and asked no more questions.

Nevertheless, he had begun to recognise that it was a positive duty to consider the future—to

observe closely whether Hugh's character was in any way being checked or distorted by his rather unusual circumstances. Before very long, how soon indeed Stott was appalled to recognise, Hugh must decide what he intended to make of his life.

At present Hugh had not shown a decided talent in any particular direction, and Stott felt very strongly that without urgent impulse no person ought to follow what may be called the higher professions. Hence his preference for the older public schools, where general rather than special education is the rule : a preference he defended with the apparent paradox—

“Any education is good as long as it is sufficiently useless.”

During supper Stott was rather silent, and afterwards, instead of as usual settling down to a game of chess with Hugh, he said—

“I want to talk about things, if you don't mind, old man.”

In spite of his assumed carelessness, embarrassment and the inner feeling that he could not be candid made his words sound formal and apologetic, and the atmosphere reacted upon Hugh.

“All right, pater,” he said, looking rather surprised.

Stott plunged into the middle of things with—

"Have you ever thought what you'd like to be when you grow up, Hugh?"

"Oh, I dunno," said Hugh sheepishly; "the same as you, I s'pose."

Stott laughed in spite of himself: it was exactly the answer he expected and, at the bottom of his heart, hoped for. Hugh did not look at all amused, but Stott, though sympathetically understanding that he was violating the boy's confidence, thought it better to go on.

"But are you quite sure about it?" he said, "or is it because you think I want you to? We've always been so chummy that I'm afraid I've rather taken things for granted. But you're getting a big chap now, and I want you to think a little for yourself. I should hate to feel that you were doing a thing merely to please me."

Hugh fidgeted from one foot to the other and played with the chessmen. Stott's unusual solemnity made him wonder what he had done wrong.

"But why shouldn't I want to please you?" he said under his voice. "Ain't you my pater?"

Stott flushed up to his forehead. He felt a beast for trying to tear down the shy veils and delicate reserves of boyhood. His voice shook a little as he continued—

"Yes, dear boy, of course you want to please me. But sometimes you'll please me best by

going your own way. I want you to understand that each of us has got to live his own life, and that many times in your life you'll have need of very great courage—the courage to stand out against those you love best. Very often what one imagines to be the unselfish thing is really selfish, because it brings one immediate peace of mind—makes one feel comfy inside. It's really much easier to give in and please your friends than to stand out and be true to yourself. I want you to have courage to stand out."

"Is that all, pater?" said Hugh simply.

His look of appeal against this unnatural preaching was too much for Stott, and the discussion ended feebly. But the boy's behaviour made Stott feel more strongly than ever that it would be horrible cruelty to tell him the truth about his parentage now.

CHAPTER XVI

MRS. EADY interpreted Harpur's wishes pretty liberally. She had a rough and ready way of getting at the root of things, and since it was plainly in relation to his future wife that Harpur disapproved of Stott she did not consider herself bound to make any difference in her own terms with him, which were by this time tending to be confidential.

She did not explain all this to Vivien, but there was a tacit understanding between them that when Stott came to the cottage he came as her friend, and not as Vivien's. Mrs. Eady derived a good deal of amusement from Vivien's attempts to show that she did not regret the loss of Stott's society, and perhaps Vivien herself was not guiltless of a touch of spiteful pleasure in carrying out the letter of her lover's wishes. She felt the subdued moral glow one gets from accepting another person's unreasonable demands, and at the back of her mind there was the not unpleasant feeling that her scrupulous

obedience to Harpur made him a little ridiculous. It was her habit whenever Stott called to see her mother to sit for a few minutes in their company out of politeness—which of course Harpur would have expected of her—and then leave the room with some excuse which, it must be confessed, she hoped Stott would not believe. It was unfair, she thought, that he should be allowed to suppose that she avoided him of her own accord.

Stott had looked in at the cottage this afternoon for ten minutes' chat just after they had finished tea. Mrs. Eady happened to be out of the room when he came, and so Vivien was forced to entertain him. Her apologies for her mother's absence and her assurances that she would soon return were, as he observed, unnecessarily elaborate. Both he and she were thinking about Selwyn Harpur, and consequently both were a little embarrassed. They picked their words with discretion, as if Harpur were eavesdropping in the passage.

"I heard from Hugh this morning," said Stott; "he's simply desolated by the thought of not seeing you again."

"Yes, I shall be very sorry to leave Penolver," she said, colouring slightly. In her effort to avoid even the remote personality his remark intruded she had used a conventional phrase,

but she felt her heart behind the words, and was positively grateful that the unreality of her inner life had not altogether destroyed the power to be sincere.

"I could not have believed," she added, "that a place would grow upon me so."

"Yes, most people find that," he said. "I thought at first that it was going to be too rough for you."

"So did I," she said, with a laugh. "I suppose I was frightened by the strangeness of everything."

He wanted to remind her of their early morning meeting by the cross on the cliffs, so that she might recognise, as he did, how greatly she had changed since then ; but he was not sure whether her notion of propriety would not cause her to resent the allusion.

Looking at her as she sat very upright in her chair, with her hands folded in her lap, Stott felt grimly the irony of the word "emancipation" as applied to the first crude beginning of the movement which had made her possible. It was, after all, only an exchange of fetiches. The women in a Turkish seraglio were not more slaves than she. Indeed, in the jealous mental and moral segregation her engagement stood for, extremes met, and Western civilisation returned to the methods of the East. Only

less frankly, and to Stott this holding of a woman through her illusions and against her nature was more repulsive than brutal subjugation by physical force. That at least gave an opportunity for the not infrequent response of primitive instincts to the conqueror. Strongly as she attracted him both mentally and physically, he could not envy Selwyn Harpur. In so far as she was committed to him she was as much "loot," the accidental spoil of an impersonal conquest, as if she had been knocked down to him as his share of the common plunder of an army in whose ranks he was a mere unit. What made it all the sadder was the fact that she seemed already to suspect her position. The deepening line between her brows and the set of her mouth, not made for concealing her emotions, betrayed a habit of repression painful to witness in one so young. Some day all that untested womanhood lurking in her eyes and on her lips would have its revenge, at least upon her. Without vanity, Stott believed that if he had been free to make love to her, her loyalty to the idea of Harpur would not for long have withstood the attack. He felt sure that her coldness to him was consequent upon a misunderstanding which half a dozen words would remove. But those half-dozen words would involve not only treachery to Hugh, at least in intention, what-

ever the practical effect on the boy, but also a sacrifice of his personal pride, and he was not yet ready for that.

They talked about Penolver, as if agreed to confine themselves to a safe subject, though Vivien at least was aware that in talking about Penolver she was half betraying that part of herself which her duty to Harpur required her to suppress. She recalled with a sort of shame her earlier letters to Harpur, with their desperate efforts to say exactly how her new surroundings affected her. All that was like a child splashing about in a cold bath and shiveringly protesting how it was enjoying itself. She had enjoyed the change, certainly, even during the first two or three days, but it had been necessary to say so rather loudly. In her condition of low vitality when she arrived at Penolver, the cliffs and moors had oppressed her as horrid and unfriendly, but now it was just the hard-bitten austerity of the place that appealed to her imagination. With improved health, she had risen to her surroundings and got the grip of them. After Cornwall, Buckinghamshire would seem vulgar and overfed. So far from wanting to talk about her impressions, her one anxiety was now to hide even from herself how terribly she would miss the valley and the sea, and all that appealed so

strongly to what she was compelled to believe was the forbidden part of her nature.

This time Vivien remained in the room rather longer than was absolutely necessary for politeness. She was interested in watching Stott as he talked to her mother. He sat leaning forward with his broad hands clasped between his knees, and his easy attitude and the firm way his feet were planted on the floor pleased her. She was no longer repelled by his look of self-confidence, of doing the thing that he wanted. Her standard of people being intellectual, all her life until now she had consciously observed only eyes and foreheads. When she tried to remember how her acquaintances looked, she saw nothing lower than their mouths, their bodies being only more or less symmetrically shaped vessels to carry minds about in. Now she had the sudden intimation of a whole world unappreciated and unexplored. This was not the first time she had made a similar discovery. For a long time Flaxman's illustrations to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and the statues in museums made her picture the Greeks as white marble people, and it had caused her quite a mental shock when one day she suddenly realised that, as they lived, Paris and Helen and Antigone and Alcestis must have been more or less sunburnt, red or brown, with coloured eyes, live

blood in their cheeks, and dark or golden hair on their heads.

She recognised now that the general appearance of Stott was attractive, though there were several things about him that she objected to in detail. His nose was too wide, he was rather redder than she liked, and too thickly built to fit in with her negative conception of the human body as a mere mind-container. Besides the defects in his appearance, there were other things she would have liked to correct in him. There were, for example, unpleasant mannerisms in his way of speaking, due to his recoil from affectation. She would not have had him radically altered—only just tidied up, as it were; and she felt that she knew exactly how to set about the business.

It was a considerable discovery that looks and manners had an importance and an interest of their own. She appreciated Selwyn Harpur's good looks and good manners, of course, but in rather a negative way after all. It was his mind that she had fallen in love with. Not that Stott was wanting in mind, but one did not think of his mind as a separate consideration; it permeated and vitalised his whole body.

Part of the interest she felt in Stott was no doubt due to his being forbidden. She was rather surprised that she did not find in him

more obvious signs of a depraved nature. It was an article of her creed, taken on trust, that vice was always ugly, and accompanied by insolence and idleness and contempt for the family affections. Presumably Stott was vicious, yet he was extremely industrious, pleasant-mannered, and passionately devoted to his son. Then vice couldn't be so ugly, after all. Unless, indeed, Selwyn was mistaken about Stott? He had spoken emphatically enough, but he might have been misinformed. Mrs. Hyde, who knew all about Stott, had laughed at the gossipers. But then she was his friend, and besides, though Vivien liked her, she doubted whether she were the sort of person to be shocked by the particular kind of wrong-doing Harpur had indicated. Undoubtedly there was something queer about Stott, and Vivien felt sure that the key to the mystery was "the Experiment" Mrs. Hyde had alluded to.

Meanwhile, was she acting quite fairly to Selwyn? She rose from her chair and taking a book from the little shelf in the corner, said good-evening to Stott and told her mother that she was going out on the cliffs to read.

Mrs. Eady observed Stott's considering glance as he watched Vivien out of the room, though she misunderstood it.

"Daughters are a great worry, Mr. Stott," she said.

"I should say you had every reason to be satisfied," he said, with a laugh, as he sat down again.

She ~~was~~ silent for a few minutes, and then she said—

"Well, I don't know. Of course Vivien's a dear, good girl; but, to tell you the truth, I'm very anxious about her."

"Why?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know. Lots of little things. She's changed so. You wouldn't know her for the girl she was at eighteen."

"Well, you can't expect people to remain at a standstill."

"No, but you don't expect a pansy to turn into a clove-carnation," she retorted. "It wouldn't be natural, and Vivien isn't natural."

Stott reminded her of the Ugly Duckling.

"Yes, I know what you mean; but this is the other way about. I don't mean to say that Vivien is growing ugly either in looks or mind, but she's—she's not more but less than she was, if you can understand me. And if all they say about progress and the march of intellect is true, it can't be right to leave the biggest part of yourself behind you, can it?"

Stott understood quite well what she meant, but he did not say anything.

"Do you believe in long engagements, Mr. Stott?" she asked him suddenly.

"Oh, I don't know," he said, rather taken aback. "I suppose people who are going to marry ought to know something about one another."

"Yes, but can they? I don't believe they get to know each other any better, however long they are engaged. They only get critical. And if they've got to marry with illusions they might just as well swallow their illusions wholesale, without threadbare patches showing through, which only make them uncomfortable," she said, with an admirable confusion of images. "I suppose it generally comes all right afterwards," she added, "but it's rather trying to lookers-on at the time."

Mrs. Eady had practically decided, she said, after Vivien was married, to take a cottage somewhere in Cornwall,—“where I can keep bees and potter about the garden,”—and she believed that Penolver would suit her as well as anywhere else. Stott was rather disturbed at the prospect of Mrs. Eady settling so near him. He liked her, but he dreaded the idea of Vivien as Mrs. Harpur coming to visit her mother. Though, as Mrs. Eady said—

"I don't expect I shall see much of Vivien after she's married. Of course Selwyn is most polite and considerate and all that, but he treats

me rather as if I were a cannibal queen. I can see him schooling himself not to notice anything that isn't quite *comme il faut* in his future mother-in-law. I can hear the machinery clicking until I want to scream. I don't mean that he's afraid of my making social mistakes, but there's a kind of higher etiquette, don't you know. Upon my word, I shall be glad when they are married. I hope it'll turn out all right. I should feel happier if I hadn't the uncomfortable feeling that they met during one of those make-believe phases that girls get. Generally it's an actor with curly hair, and they grow out of it, but with Vivien it happened to be the higher culture, and she's stuck there."

"Do you think it matters much?" said Stott, talking against his own convictions. "So long as people are reasonably suited to each other, most marriages turn out all right. And if they have the same interests——"

"But that's just it," interrupted Mrs. Eady. "Have they? I don't know about Selwyn Harpur, but with Vivien I'm sure it is not genuine. It's not learning, but the idea of learning that attracts her. If she were contented I shouldn't mind, but she isn't. She gets bored with her books and won't say so."

"Surely that isn't a very serious matter."

"No, I shouldn't worry about that, if it wasn't

for the other side of her that's getting neglected in the process," said Mrs. Eady. "As you say, most marriages turn out all right, because most people aren't capable of very strong feelings. But Vivien is, only she has kept her nose to her books for so long that she has forgotten how to let herself go. For instance, I believe that she cares for me a great deal, but she never shows it now—not in the silly little ways mothers like. She won't cuddle down."

"Now," thought Stott sympathetically, "we're getting to the real grievance."

"Vivien was always a queer, imaginative child," Mrs. Eady went on reflectively; "she had a great sense of the thinginess of things, if you can understand what I mean. You know," she said in parenthesis, "all my sympathies are with poor *Peter Bell*. If the primrose was primrosy enough to him, I believe he got more good out of it than by talking about it or pulling it to pieces. Vivien had all sorts of queer tricks: she used to arrange her clothes, when she took them off, with the thick, dark things on top, to take care of the others. A frock, you know, had quite a different character from a petticoat. She would say the quaintest things. She said once that a certain cat looked as if it belonged to an old couple without any children. And I remember once when a wicker

chair creaked she said it was a cosy noise, 'as if the blinds were drawn and the lamp lighted.' And can't you feel what she meant by a 'pink smell'? But, dear me, I get garrulous."

Stott begged her to go on.

"Well, what I'm trying to make you understand is that all these little kinks seem to have been ironed out—just as I've heard of the quality of people's singing voices being ruined by over-training. Now, Vivien always gives a reason for everything, and if she can't give a reason things must be wrong, and so she disregards what I can't help feeling is the best part of her. When first we came down here I began to think it was all coming back again: she seemed to be getting more impulsive, more tolerant, more womanly perhaps. But now again—— It's as if she were afraid to let herself go. I sometimes wish that she might have trouble, so that she would have need of me. Oh, I don't know," she said, taking up her sewing with a sigh; "I'm very bothered about her altogether."

"You know," she said, when presently Stott took his leave, "I often feel inclined to quote to Vivien something I saw in a Nonsense Book—

'If you were born to walk the ground,
Remain there; do not fool around.'"

CHAPTER XVII

AT about half-past four o'clock on a May afternoon Stott lingered to smoke a pipe in his favourite corner of the Rosemorran Valley. This was a bend in the narrow cart-road which ran along the eastern slope, between tall hedges of escallonia and veronica. Under the hedge at one side there was a rude seat made of a plank nailed to two stumps of trees. During working hours Stott's men left their coats and dinner-baskets at this corner, from which several smaller paths radiated to the different fields. The men called the place "Cap'n Stott's Quarterdeck."

Stott walked backwards and forwards in a space of about twenty yards. His hands were thrust deep into his trousers pockets, his shoulders were squared, and his bearded chin was lifted rather high. The whole appearance of the man was aggressively self-confident, almost arrogant. He had stuffed his cap into the pocket of his old brown shooting-jacket. Occasionally he bent his head to sniff at the sprig of purple

veronica in his buttonhole : it had a smell not unlike that of honeysuckle.

There had been a heavy shower an hour ago, but now the sky was very blue and the sun shone warmly. A visible steam rose from the heated soil, a subdued pattering still went on in and around the hedges, and here and there a prismatic bead of water flashed back at the sun. The air was very still, and the smoke of Stott's pipe hung low and fragrant in the leafy alley, drowning the faint mingled odour of wet earth and young growing things. At one point there was a swarm of gnats dancing in the sun. Every now and again Stott blew a cloud of smoke into the swarm, dispersing it ; but by the time he returned to the same spot the gnats were there dancing again. Some comparison in his mind amused him, and he smiled broadly.

At each turn of his walk there was a break in the hedge where a path descended, commanding a general view of the valley beneath him. His eye now rested upon an acre or two of small-fruit bushes in pale-green, parallel lines against the dark, newly wetted earth. Beyond them was a rosy sheet of apple-blossom with violet shades in it, and beyond that again a breadth of rainbow-tinted sea. On the other side of the valley above the fields ran a belt of gorse in full bloom. It was like a gold frame dividing the organised com-

position of the fields—which resembled a gigantic sampler worked in coloured wools—from the grey-green monotony of pastoral upland. It also served to remind Stott that the greater part of the rich garden in the valley had been reclaimed from moorland by his own efforts and in defiance of local advice. Previous holders of the land, their attention confined to grazing, had left off cultivation at the edge of the valley.

It was partly the feeling of having triumphed over difficulties that contributed to Stott's complacent mood. He had made the round of his farm and found everything in order. The flower season, now nearly over, had been unusually good, the early potatoes were lifting well, and the small fruit was coming on satisfactorily. But if you had asked Stott exactly why he was pleased he could not have told you. Certainly not because he expected to make a good deal of money out of his farm this year, though he did not despise money. Probably his pleasure was almost entirely æsthetic. Next to creation, there is perhaps nothing that gives a man so much satisfaction as the knowledge that he has mastered and turned to his own profit some of the secrets of the earth.

For some time now Stott had been thinking about a considerable extension of his activities. He had ideas of starting a cheese factory, and

he hoped some day to make cider. So far his manufactured use of the products of his farm had been chiefly experimental: now he was ready to begin on a larger scale. But these were questions not to be decided in a hurry, and they kept his mind pleasantly occupied. For one thing, both cheese-making and cider-brewing would necessitate the employment of more highly skilled labour than he had yet required. They would also, he thought, imply co-operation, if not actual partnership, with neighbouring farmers. He had lately been interested by accounts of movements in the cheese and in the champagne districts of France, where small farmers and small vine-growers had combined to make use of their own products, and were competing successfully with the regular manufacturers. But he was not quite sure whether it was not merely the idea that attracted him. He knew the fallacy implied in a sentimental preference for the "home-made," and he dreaded more than anything to start an industry under conditions which were perhaps not adapted to the needs of modern markets. Certainly he could not expect to brew cider or make cheese profitably, entirely on his own account, and yet he was a little reluctant to invite outside co-operation with his affairs. It was his peculiar pride to be independent of his neighbours.

Meanwhile the farm was prospering, and Hugh was writing happy letters home from school. Even Stott's emotions about Vivien Eady, though leading to no apparent conclusion, affected him not unpleasantly. Like so many men, strongly attracted towards one woman in particular, he began to think kindly of the whole sex. His dreams did not perhaps get so far as thoughts, but the future was veiled in a rosy mist of possibilities.

As if the incarnation of these possibilities, a very charming woman appeared at the turn of the path. Mrs. Fleming was, as usual, dressed with ludicrous disregard for the country, yet with such a personal touch that the anomaly did not suggest under-breeding or ignorance. She wore a smoke- or cobweb- coloured frock, flimsy and voluminous, and from her large hat a useless veil of gauze was lightly twisted round her slender shoulders. She picked her way delicately along the muddy road, holding her skirt high in either hand, and displaying a mauve silk petticoat and pointed high-heeled shoes. There was in her whole appearance a something Watteauesque and perverse which amused Stott while it piqued him to bluntness of expression.

"Hullo!" he said unceremoniously. "You haven't been to see me for ever so long."

She gave him her two hands while he helped her over a puddle, and she brought up almost against him, leaving her hands in his for a moment.

"How cold your hands are!" he said.

"Are they?" she answered absently, looking at them. "Why haven't I been to see you? Well, what's the good of coming for heart-to-heart talks with a man when he's thinking about nothing but a boy?"

This, as Stott knew, was an old grievance of hers, though he did not attribute it so much to jealousy of Hugh as to her dislike of children in general.

"Well, come up and have some tea," he said. "I was just going home. If you're very good, I'll play Schumann for you. I believe there's a touch of the German in me. When I'm contented, I grow sentimental and want to slop-over in music."

She looked about her consideringly.

"Give me time to breathe," she said. "I've only just come down, and this is a pleasant enough place. What a foul pipe you're smoking!"

"Sorry," said Stott, removing the pipe from his lips.

"No, don't," she said, laying her hand on his arm. "I like it: it's so male. Heavens!" she continued, "you don't know what it is to get away from the Rectory for an hour."

"Bored?" he asked, with a quizzical up-lifting of one eyebrow.

She screwed up her face and brought it nearer to him.

"Damnably," she said; "there's no other word. But can't we sit down?"

He wiped the seat with his handkerchief, and they sat down.

"Well, why do you come down to Cornwall?" he asked.

She laughed awkwardly, saying—

"Did you ever pay a compliment to anybody?"

"Can't remember," he said. "But, seriously, the presence of you in the country is the funniest thing I know. I always think of you in association with clubs and matinées and symphony concerts and dinners at the Carlton."

"All the things that you despise, in fact."

"Not a bit."

"Then you despise the people that like them."

"No, I don't—so long as they do like them."

"Has it never struck you that perhaps it isn't so easy for all of us as it is for you to find out what we do like?" she said, looking down at the toe of her shoe.

"Poor thing!" he said.

"Sensibility," she retorted, turning away her head, "is not one of your virtues, Mr. Stott."

When she looked round again, he saw that there were actual tears in her eyes.

"I'm very sorry," he murmured, reddening. "I'm always so brutally well that I forget nerves and things."

"Oh, nerves!" she said impatiently.

"I believe that our bodies have more to do with contentment than most people are willing to admit," he went on argumentatively.

She regarded him with dissatisfied eyes, biting her lip.

"Did you ever go wanting anything in this world?" she asked in a voice that was harsh and uneven.

Stott filled out his great chest and, with a smile, jingled money in his pockets.

"Do you know that I'm quite a warm man?" he replied obliquely. "Why should I be discontented? I've had to fight against all sorts of difficulties—want of cash, bad seasons, enemies, friends—but I'm feeling my feet now."

"And the—goodwill—of your fellow-creatures, does that count for nothing?"

"A lot, so long as it does not require the sacrifice of my individuality."

"Nor your privacy," she added, with a short laugh.

"Exactly," he said, with a slow nod, and setting his jaws grimly, "nor my privacy."

He suspected that recent gossip about him had whetted her curiosity and that she hoped to draw him out. For once he was not so displeased as he might have been. He was perhaps a little off his usual balance and, as is often the case in moods of deep satisfaction, he was not ill-disposed to trifle with a person for whom he had no great regard. Wondering with sly amusement what her next question would be, he took the sprig of veronica out of his coat and smelled at it.

"One of the odd vicious colours," she said, taking hold of the flower with unsteady fingers; "I love it."

"It reminds me somehow of you," he said, trying to remember why, when she explained—

"It happens to be nearly the colour of my petticoat." She pulled up the skirt of her gown an inch or so with an audacity that was yet a little nervous.

"So it is," said Stott, with unmoved gravity.

She held the flower to her nose and was silent for a few minutes.

"Suppose I said that I came down here because of Selwyn Harpur?" she said presently, with a side glance at him.

"Shouldn't be surprised," said Stott unconcernedly.

"Nor shocked?"

"Not in the least. Why should I be?"

"Dear Selwyn," she said meditatively. "I have always the embarrassing feeling that he is trying to spare me as much as possible. I think perhaps I ought to tell him that it doesn't hurt so much as it did."

As he did not make any comment, she went on—

"No, I didn't come down to gnash my teeth over Selwyn Harpur and his Junoesque bride that is to be. Isn't there something indelicately provocative about the preliminary parade of a man and a woman who are not but are shortly about to be married?"

Her lips whitened as with sidelong eyes she watched the vein swell up on his forehead.

"A kind of gloating and doting," she went on in her slow voice, her mouth distorted with a cruel smile. "Leighton's 'Wedded' may stand as an example of the curious British tolerance of anything but frank passion. Don't you think so?"

"I haven't thought about it," he said curtly, not knowing that she was hurting herself far more than she hurt him.

"Well," she said, after a little silence, "why don't you talk? How's oats?"

Understanding her to ask for a general account of his doings, he told her about his plans for the future. She listened interestedly, but protested

at the idea of "spoiling the countryside with ugly factories."

"That's a fetich," he said. "A factory needn't be ugly. It is because all your conceptions of beauty are second-hand. You dare not trust yourself to decide what is and what is not beautiful except by hearsay. It's doubtful whether there is anything intrinsically ugly or beautiful. I've seen Chelsea Gasworks look more beautiful than Westminster Abbey. Anyhow, you may take it as broadly true that usefulness and beauty are one. A thing which is fulfilling its purpose well can't be ugly. If it is ugly, then it is defective somewhere, from a practical point of view. Oh, but where are we going?" he broke off, with a laugh.

"You are brutally logical," she said.

"Your adverb proves that you have a prejudiced conception of logic," he replied. "Logic is the sword of deliverance which none but the single-hearted dare handle."

She laughed uneasily, and said—

"It surprises me that having such a high conception of logic you don't go farther in practice."

"I've got, or am getting, most of the things I want," he answered aggressively.

"Not all."

"No?" he said.

She smoothed out her dress with a furtive smile.

“ Unless you claim to be passionless.”

He smoked for a while in silence, and then he said—

“ Marriage by capture is obsolete, and the modern equivalent, marriage by purchase, is distasteful to me.”

“ Surely your logic ought to have found you a way out of that ? ”

“ Yes,” he said, “ but my logic jibs at the fulfilment of some desires at the expense of others—for refinement and sympathetic companionship, for example.”

“ You forget that women have developed a little during the last ten years or so—or, at least, have got rid of some of their prejudices.”

“ No, I don’t; but earnestness is sometimes as tedious as vulgarity, and Nature is sometimes so unkind as to give the bravest intentions to persons least competent to fulfil them. I’ve seen unprejudiced women in newspaper offices, and frankly, of the two—compromises—I should prefer Lalage.”

“ But why Lalage and not Aspasia ? If I were a man, and human — and logical — and I met a woman who was unprejudiced, and at the same time attracted me——”

“ Ah, there you are ! ” he said. “ If.”

“ Perhaps you’ve tried experiments,” she said, with a little, hard laugh ; adding, in an undertone,

"As indeed circumstances would lead one to suppose."

He looked at her narrowly.

"Dainty ladies shouldn't ask questions," he said, bending over her and thoughtlessly touching her hand.

She snatched her hand away as if his had burnt it.

"Don't do that!" she said passionately.

"I beg your pardon," he stammered, taken aback. "I'm awfully sorry."

For a few moments she seemed unable to speak. He eyed her with concerned curiosity.

"Mrs. Fleming," he said gravely, "I apologise most sincerely. But you know that there are very few people I treat with any familiarity, and I thought that you allowed me—that you paid me the compliment to take me as I am." And seeing that she was recovering her composure, he continued in a slightly railing tone, "Besides, I didn't think you were a prude."

"Prude!" she echoed, with a short laugh, crimsoned and went white again.

He was still perplexed, and now a little annoyed.

"I express myself badly," he said.

She looked at him enigmatically. She seemed no longer angry, but she was very pale, and breathing quickly.

"Well, am I forgiven?" he said, with a smile.

She did not answer for a moment, but her expression suddenly changed, and she seemed to be listening. Then she frowned sharply, and Stott turning his head, saw Vivien Eady and her mother coming round the corner. Mrs. Fleming jumped up with a little confused laugh, and said rather loudly—

“Yes, I’ll forgive you.”

Stott coloured deeply as he rose from the seat. He saw that Vivien had heard Mrs. Fleming’s last words and that she was both annoyed and humiliated. Mrs. Eady looked from himself to Mrs. Fleming, at first with surprise and then quizzically. Mrs. Fleming, with an amazingly clever assumption of recovering herself, held out her hand.

“Perhaps we shall get some tea now you’ve come,” she said. “Mr. Stott has the oddest notions of entertaining his friends.”

Vivien Eady knew now that Mrs. Fleming had succeeded in making her feel jealous. Not, however, on account of Selwyn Harpur.

CHAPTER XVIII

ALL at once Vivien Eady learned a great many things about herself and about other people. She understood Mrs. Fleming in a flash, and was not too young and inexperienced to recognise that a woman with the reputation of a flirt who took such pains as Mrs. Fleming had taken to conceal her interest in a particular man must be very hard set upon him. Mrs. Fleming had always talked to her in a subtly disparaging way about Stott while praising Selwyn Harpur. Her sudden throwing off the veil could only mean that she had in some way made sure of her conquest, or at least believed that she had. Though Vivien refused to believe that Stott really cared for Mrs. Fleming, his behaviour when she and her mother had come upon them in the Rosemorran Valley was that of a man disturbed in an ardent flirtation.

Mrs. Fleming was much too clever to assume that Vivien had not found her out, and on their next meeting she affected a confidential manner.

The pressure of her hand on Vivien's arm was an appeal for sympathy. But since Vivien was unable to conceal her coldness and her dislike for her, Mrs. Fleming with sly malice began to talk about Selwyn Harpur.

"I heard from Selwyn—you don't mind me calling him Selwyn?—this morning," she said, and volunteered nothing further. She saw Vivien whiten, and at once recognised her opportunity to trade upon the girl's assumption that she had told tales about her. With the insolence of a person lying but not expecting to be believed, she kept up a pretence of being jealous of Vivien for having supplanted her with Selwyn Harpur, while all the time her sullen eyes assured her—

"You are welcome to your Selwyn Harpur : be satisfied with him."

Vivien knew very well now that she was not and never could be satisfied with Selwyn Harpur. She supposed that she cared for him well enough to marry him, and she was certain that she had never been disloyal to him by so much as half a word. Now she tried to persuade herself that her grievance against him was all on account of Mrs. Fleming. He had no right to be so far in Mrs. Fleming's confidence as even to lead her to suppose that he could listen to her insinuations against the girl to whom he was engaged. But the moment she had parted from Mrs. Fleming,

Vivien knew that her only grievance against Selwyn Harpur was that he was not somebody else.

Until now love had been associated in her mind with the sense of effort, of walking by the light of reason in high and slippery places. But here was love as easy as breathing—a headlong descent, if she did not take care. It was a something to be fought against, not for; a thing altogether beyond reason, not bred in the mind at all, but a conspiracy of the nerves and the blood, most powerful in moments of idleness. And in the conspiracy were involved all those innocent things which pleased or troubled her senses—the faces of children, the eyes of mothers, the full-throated song of birds, the rapture of spring, and the moods of the sea. All that so carefully woven etiquette of graceful sentiment and scholarly allusion became suddenly threadbare: it meant nothing at all. She learned that, for a woman, whether the man she loved were a philosopher or a clown mattered nothing, so long as she loved him. Her long unheeded instincts had their revenge at last. Now she knew frankly that she had been fooled by her very intelligence: a dull-brained farm-girl could not have made such a mistake.

But she faced the future bravely. She had given her word and meant to keep it. She had

nothing against the man she had promised to marry, and every day could be lived through. Only every day would not be any the brighter for a passing glimpse of Paradise. She turned to her books again with a furious industry. They were a foolish waste of time, but they would at least serve to drown thought.

Seeing her so unhappy, Mrs. Fleming could afford to be a little amused, though, indeed, she was miserable enough herself. For the first time in her restless, dissatisfied life she, too, knew clearly what she wanted. She did not flatter herself that Stott was in love with her, but she knew men well enough not to despair of him. A man with that frame and those full pulses would need to be very strongly possessed by the idea of one woman to be always on guard against himself. And Mrs. Fleming at least had no illusions about the kind of love she would be contented with from him. She hugged her knowledge about Hugh. That, she felt, removed the chief barrier between herself and Stott's passions. As yet there was nothing sinister in her mind beyond the terrible selfishness of a passion which had come upon her with all the force of a disease.

Boredom had driven her away from St. Adrian Rectory to Trevenen, where she was taking painting lessons from Lumley. Any pre-

text would serve which enabled her to outstay Vivien Eady, and it was now the beginning of July. She had some talent for painting, and her graceful insolence and caustic humour gave her a sort of popularity with the other students as a body, though each individually disliked her. Her attendance at the studio was very irregular ; and the afternoons she frequently spent sketching, or pretending to sketch, in the Rosemorran Valley. Though she was too cunning to do what she had hinted to Vivien—write to Harpur—suspecting Stott and suspecting Vivien, she had the insane hope that her presence in the place would help to prevent them running the risk of meeting secretly.

With Stott himself she was distant and wary. He was amazingly self-controlled, but to her, made keen-sighted by jealousy, he betrayed himself in a dozen little ways. She took a perverse pleasure in torturing herself and him by talking about Vivien and her marriage.

“It is one of those ideal marriages one hears about,” she said. “Well, I’m never very sanguine about ideal marriages. I suppose there’s something in people that makes them want to garnish their tables, but if you mistake interest in the dressing-up for appetite for the food you are nearly certain to get indigestion. That’s my philosophy—coarse, if you like—but my own.”

Slyly pretending that Stott's moodiness was due to his absorption in the affairs of his farm, she added—

“But of course all this doesn't interest you. When are you going to begin building your factories? Poor Hugh! Between one thing and another, he is likely to be neglected.”

That stung him, and indirectly caused him to break through his usual reserve with Vivien Eady. Hugh wrote to him complaining that Vivien had not fulfilled her promise to write. He could not understand it, he said: had he done anything to offend her? Stott was annoyed and ashamed, because he believed that Vivien's faithlessness to Hugh was on his account. Between them all the boy was being treated shabbily: it was intolerable that he should be made to suffer for their weaknesses.

In the evening Stott called at the Eadys' cottage, where he had not been for some time. As he entered the sitting-room Vivien rose from her books with a swift, defensive movement, and stood with the tips of her fingers resting on the table between them and her eyes fixed on his.

“My mother is out, Mr. Stott,” she said in an alarmed voice. She was not afraid of him, but of herself. He had come upon her in an unguarded moment, when she had been thinking

about him, and she had not had time to regain her defences. He did not know this, but he saw that she was agitated, and he knew with a devout feeling of thankfulness that the love he felt for her was of the better sort. It would have been canting to say that there was no self in it, but self was for the moment in abeyance. He checked the hot words that came to his lips, and began to talk about indifferent subjects, while studying her face. She looked warm and palpitating; he believed that he could follow her quick heart-beats in her throat and temples. This, if he had cared to take it, was his opportunity. She was dressed in creamy-white, which in the half light of the primrose-painted room gave to her tall figure a blurred, uncertain outline of inexpressible tenderness, reminding him of that aura of light and fragrance which surrounds meadowsweet. Her colour came and went, her dusky head rose and sank with each respiration, and her sensitive hands trembled on the table. It needed all Stott's self-control to keep him from her side. After a while, as if calmed by his careful speech and quiet regard, she sank into her chair again and rested her intertwined fingers on the table before her.

"Won't you sit down?" she said in a low voice.

"No, thanks; I didn't mean to stop," he said easily, resting his hand on the door.

"Hugh's written, and I'm afraid he's a little hurt. He's taken a great fancy to you, Miss Eady, and a letter means such a lot to a boy of his age. And you promised to write, you know."

"Oh yes, I'll certainly write," she murmured hastily.

He did not press her, and he fancied that she looked grateful for his forbearance. Any further reference to the matter would have brought them upon delicate ground. He guessed that she had not written in deference to Harpur's wishes, and though he thought her quite unnecessarily scrupulous he respected her intention. He felt sure that she took for granted he knew why she had not written, and that brought them into a closer intimacy than they had reached before. And so, without any direct personality, a great many things contrived to find utterance. Without complaint or reproaches or expressed regret, they defined the barriers between them by allusion to this and that, as clever ambassadors with no quarrel of their own might still insist on the insoluble difference between their respective Governments. Believing that never again would they be so near to each other as now, as if in heart-breaking comment upon might-have-beens, during their five minutes' conversation they felt how each reacted upon the other : she found

courage, and he was a little less blunt and overbearing than usual. She allowed him to feel something of her perplexities, and he without intrusion advised her. It was a point of honour to keep himself well in hand, and he spoke with a composed gaiety, "rather like an uncle," he thought afterwards, with a grim smile.

"Well," he said at last, "I must be going. Possibly I shan't see you again. Think the best you can of me, and please write to Hugh."

He did not dare to touch her hand. Against her will, she followed him to the door of the cottage, and stood aimlessly rubbing her hands together and staring with troubled eyes out into the garden. It seemed cruel to part like this, yet what was there to be said or done?

"Yes, I will," she said in the tone of a child promising to be good.

Mrs. Fleming met him coming away from the cottage, and all her cunning was not proof against her suspicious jealousy.

"You knew that Mrs. Eady was at my brother's," she said, without preliminary greeting.

"No, I didn't," he said quietly, and with a half-smile, as if he were indulging a child's anger.

She turned and walked with him. His gravity and composure made her know not what to believe.

"Do you think you are acting fairly by that

girl?" she said, controlling her voice to a tone of injured propriety.

Stott lifted his head with a little, bitter laugh. •

"She is engaged to another man," said Mrs. Fleming. "You are never likely to see her again after she leaves here. It is not right to upset her, to make her dissatisfied. If you intended to cut the man out like a man, there might be some excuse for you, but you don't. Selwyn Harpur is a friend of mine, and I'm not going to stand by and see his wife tampered with."

"You are sometimes more than indiscreet, Mrs. Fleming," he said.

His light way with her was maddening.

"Well, you make me," she said violently. "Do you think that a girl who associates with a man of your reputation is not going to be talked about? People are not blind. You are watched and commented upon."

"Who watches me?" he said, with his chin protruded, and glancing at her sideways.

"Ah, that's like you!" she cried, "to want to revenge yourself upon a feeble, superstitious old man! But other people besides Tyacke have noticed the underhand game you are carrying on."

"Your brother, for example?"

"My brother is a fool," she said, "but

still he has eyes in his head. I shall write to Selwyn Harpur to-morrow."

"I wish to God you would!" broke from him against his will.

"Yes," she said in a calmer tone—"to give you a free hand. You would like an excuse to quarrel with him, so that it should not be said you took advantage of your friend's absence."

"He was never my friend," he said.

His frankness, as if he were justifying himself, gave her a new idea. She regretted her hasty anger. Some men, she thought, are never so approachable as after a repulse.

"That is an evasion," she said. "Anyhow, he is my friend. But I shan't write to him just to play into your hands," she added, with a laugh. After a moment, she continued in a friendly, reproving tone, "You do make me angry sometimes. You are such a humbug; you pretend not to be human."

At the foot of the lane leading up to the farm he stopped, as if to say good-evening.

"No," she said; "I am coming up with you. Unless you forbid me?"

"What nonsense!" he said, with a laugh. "Only you'll have a late walk to Trevenen, and it's going to thunder."

She looked up at the sky, which was closing down upon a hot and airless evening.

"Not for an hour or so," she said, "and I'm not afraid of thunder. I like it."

"You know, you're rather silly," he said, as they climbed the steep road; "by all means write to Harpur, if you like. It will only give Miss Eady another reason for disliking me."

The regret in his voice confirmed her idea of what had happened. "Yes," she thought, "he has tried to make love to her, and she will have none of him, because she thinks he is a blackguard." The touch of cruelty in her nature caused her to add—

"I wonder if she can see us now," and she turned her head to look back at the cottage.

At the door of the house she said, "I'm coming in for a few minutes"; adding, with a nervous laugh, "As you observed, I'm not a prude."

He silently led the way into the sitting-room, gloomy with the green shade of the shrubs in the garden, and struck a match.

"What a man you are!" she said impatiently. "Can't you tolerate a half light for ten minutes?"

He blew out the match and flung it into the fireplace.

She moved restlessly about the darkened room with a whisper of silken skirts, and peered at the barely visible pictures on the walls. She went to the window and drummed on the sash.

"I really believe it's going to be a heavy storm," she said.

"I'm afraid so," he answered drily.

She stared out into the dusk with eyes that saw nothing. From where he stood by the mantelpiece, her figure was darkly outlined against the window square, and he could see her breast rising and falling quickly and unevenly as she breathed.

"I'm very sorry for you," she murmured, without turning her head. He did not answer, and she said—

"Why are you so sullen with me?"

"I'm sorry," he said, with a short laugh. "I didn't mean to be a bear."

"Why don't you sit down? You make me feel that you want to turn me out," she said, coming away from the window and standing before him.

He roused himself, and sat down in the nearest chair beside the empty hearth.

"I'm afraid I'm very inhospitable," he said, with an attempt to seem interested. "Shall I call Mrs. Ford to light a fire?"

"I'm suffocating," she replied.

"I'll open the other window," and he half rose.

"Please do sit still," she said, with almost hysterical emphasis. "I want to talk to you, but not about windows and fires. Why do you keep me at such a distance?"

"You're over-sensitive," he said; "one can't be always screwed up to your pitch."

She stood, with one foot on the fender, playing with something on the mantelpiece; and as if she had suddenly discovered that it was Hugh's photograph, she pushed it away with an irritable movement.

"It isn't like you," she said, "to hanker after something which is out of your reach."

"If you don't mind," he said moodily, "we won't talk about that."

"But I will talk about Miss Eady," she said, turning sharply round. "What do you want with a girl like that? You are not a boy, and you must know that the talk about intellectual companionship is all bosh. Men don't love women for that—not men like you."

"I really don't think this is worth while," he said coldly.

"It's absolutely no use," she went on, disregarding or not hearing him, "and I can't think why you above all people can't see it. I don't know what you are hoping for, but I'm quite sure that a girl like Miss Eady will stick to her word if you go on talking till Doomsday. Even if she cared for you, it would make no difference. It's all a matter of honour and principle with her—fidelity to an idea, not a man. It's not so much strength of character as want

of elasticity. She's paralysed by conventions ; she's forgotten what an impulse is like. She's been trained for Selwyn Harpur, and Selwyn Harpur she'll marry, if it kills her."

"I haven't the least doubt about that," he said.

"There's the lightning!" she said, with a strange excitement. A low peal of thunder answered her words. "I'm afraid you'll have to shelter me for a bit longer," she continued exultantly. "Is Mrs. Ford afraid of lightning?"

"Not that I know," said Stott, wondering. "Besides, there are the other maids."

She moved round the room, humming to herself. By the door she waited for a few seconds.

"What time do you have supper?" she asked abruptly.

"About half-past eight," he said. "Will you stop?"

"I don't know."

She laughed oddly, with a quick shiver, and going to the piano, she struck a jangling chord.

"We never got our Schumann that day," she said.

"No," replied Stott. "Shall I play now?"

"Oh no," she said absently, coming back to her place on the hearthrug; "don't play now."

"Anyhow," she continued incoherently, "she isn't worth it. You'd tire of her in a week."

She wouldn't understand you ; she'd bore you to death by wanting to know the reason of everything you did or thought. She's as cold as an iceberg."

The room was shaken by a heavy peal of thunder, and immediately a hissing downpour of rain whitened the dusky garden.

They were silent for a few minutes, and she, standing erect with her hands at her waist, seemed to be listening. The next moment she dropped on her knees at his feet.

"Why won't you take what is offered?" she said in a choking murmur. Her hot hands were about his head, and her lips hungrily sought for his. She felt him draw his head away from hers, and his body contract under her hands. It was no virtue in him, as she bitterly knew, but sheer physical distaste. If she had persisted—— But there was a limit even to her shamelessness. Her hold upon him relaxed, she rose to her feet, and moving unsteadily across the room, sank into a chair.

It seemed to Stott an eternity before she moved again. Whenever the lightning played into the room, he could see her huddled together in the chair with her face hidden in her hands. He could hear her breathing regularly, though at intervals the sound rose up to a gasping sob ; but he did not think that she was crying. The

worst of the storm outside passed over, and the room began to lighten before sunset, though the rain was heavily falling still. She rose quickly, and her hands were busy about her loosened hair. Stott moved towards her.

"You can't go out in this rain," he said.

"I'm going," she answered; "I'll not pollute your house."

He followed her into the passage.

"I shall come with you," he said, reaching for his cap.

"If you move or follow me, I shall kill you or myself," she said quietly.

He opened the door, and she passed out into the rain.

CHAPTER XIX

VIVIEN did not see Stott again before she left Penolver, though her mother called upon him to say good-bye. It must be confessed that Vivien wondered a little sorely why he did not make another opportunity to see her, though it is doubtful whether she would have faced the interview if he had tried to bring it about. She would certainly not have listened to him if he had said what her heart told her was in his heart, but his passive acceptance of the situation disappointed her. She did her best to banish him from her mind : he was concerned with such unexplored abysses, such untested fibres of her nature, that she was afraid to think about him. How much she cared for him, or whether she cared for him at all, she literally did not know. He appealed to a set of instincts over which she must draw a decent veil, never to lift it again. Putting Selwyn Harpur on one side, she would not then have been sure that the unregulated and unorganised emotions which Stott awakened

within her were not wrong in themselves. Particularly since she believed him to be an immoral man. She had the most rigid standard of conduct in men, and that she could be attracted by an immoral man was to her proof that she herself had degenerated. By training she drew a very firm line between duty and pleasure. Selwyn Harpur undoubtedly stood for everything she included in the word duty, and Stott, she supposed, was pleasure. She turned her back upon pleasure. One small consolation she had : Mrs. Fleming, on an apparently sudden impulse, went back to Devonshire three days before she and her mother left Penolver.

As if sympathetically aware of the ordeal she had suffered, Harpur when he met them at Paddington was at his best and tenderest. He was magnanimously silent about Penolver, except to comment upon her looks—as if with supererogatory fairness conceding the benefit of a holiday he had never entirely approved. He contrived to make her feel that the visit to Penolver was a mistake which had turned out better than anybody could have expected, and though Stott was not mentioned by name her conscience told her that Selwyn included him among the natural consequences of the mistake. It was as if with an indulgent nod and smile he reminded her of some childish peccadillo.

She ought to have known better, certainly, but she was young enough not to be treated too harshly. His appreciative way with her gave her the comfortable sense that what she had taken to be a singular depravity was at her age and under the circumstances only natural.

"I know, I know—we'll say no more about it," was in his affectionate embrace, and by the same token she tacitly agreed that she really ought to be grown-up now.

They spent three days with Harpur's mother at Sevenoaks. On her previous visits to the magnificent old lady Vivien had received kindness and affection, but now Mrs. Harpur made a gift of herself. It was as if Selwyn had bidden his mother to reserve judgment until Vivien was sufficiently moulded, and now whipped aside a curtain with—

"Now, mother, here she is."

There could be no doubt that his choice and handiwork were warmly approved. Evidently Selwyn's mother was entirely in his confidence, and she, even more delicately than he, congratulated Vivien on her reaffirmed loyalty to the better way. Vivien was almost persuaded that her ordeal had been deliberately arranged—that she had been shown intellectual slackness and moral ambiguity as the young man is shown

"life" by daring guardians to clinch his hold upon virtue. Consequently she had a lively sense of hairbreadth escapes. It was by virtue of some distinction which only Selwyn had foreseen that she had come through. All this time, in spite of her engagement, she had, so far as Mrs. Harpur was concerned, been on probation, watched and commented on as from Olympus. And she cheerfully agreed that the risk to herself of being found wanting and in the end discarded was a matter of no consequence in comparison with the importance of the selection. Now she was formally accepted, and made to feel how narrowly she had earned acceptance. Her engagement had been wonderful all along, but she only now understood the passionate care which had gone to it, the momentous issues not only for herself and for Selwyn, but for humanity in general, which were involved in its fulfilment. She was that unique combination of spiritual fineness, brains, and beauty for which presumably Selwyn had searched the world of women. Frankly, she had not been living up to Selwyn.

"I suppose," said Mrs. Harpur in a *tête-à-tête*, "that only you and I can ever know the real Selwyn. You'll not feel hurt, I'm sure, when I say that there have been times when I have doubted—not you yourself—but whether you

could quite understand. I was often tempted to give you a hint for guidance, but after all I'm glad I did not. It was far, far better that you should find out for yourself. He is more fortunate than I could have believed."

Her kiss on Vivien's brow was a formal benediction.

On the whole, Mrs. Eady behaved very well. Only once her incorrigible levity found expression, and that was when she came to tuck Vivien up on the first night of their visit.

"It is as if we had been Commanded to Appear," she said.

They left for Paris in a glow and a flutter. A note of unreality was struck for Vivien when, as they sidled up to the pier at Calais, she caught sight of the *képis* and fixed bayonets of two soldiers lurking behind an embankment. Since she had watched boys playing at soldiers she had never seen anything or anybody so truculently alert, so aggressively military. This keynote of make-believe was eventually to lead her to a deeper understanding of herself and of life, but for the moment she imagined herself in a land of grown-up children. The ridiculous horns blown by railway officials, the thin, high-pitched whistle of the locomotives, the women at the level crossings, or working in the wide, unparcelled fields, the toy-box churches, the men fishing in

rush-grown pools, were all details in a stupendous game of play.

It was late evening when they reached Paris. As they stepped into their clumsy black-and-yellow cab, drawn by a white horse, Vivien expected their driver to remove his white glazed top-hat with a flourish, lay it on his heart, and break into passionate recitative. Her first impression of the streets was of riotous traffic all going on for the fun of the thing—"keeping the pot boiling." She refused to believe that a single occupant of the cabs, black motor-cars, omnibuses, and overgrown tram-cars wanted to get anywhere. They were simply going round and round to fill up the hours before bedtime. Even the bicycles discredited their utility by carrying red Chinese lanterns instead of lamps. Innumerable girls, dressed in black, bareheaded, and carrying milliners' boxes on their hips, threaded their way amongst the vehicles with a dancing assurance, and created the impression that every woman in Paris who had not already joined the fun was waiting impatiently at home for a new hat. The tall, flat-faced white houses, with louvre shutters folded back, soaring above the brilliantly lighted shops, had the air of being slid-on in grooves for that night only. Every few yards, it seemed, a group of marble-topped tables and Vienna chairs usurped the pavement,

as if by obstruction they would compel the revellers to stop and take refreshment. Here and there an English word flared out on one of the little warm-lit hexagonal kiosques with Tudor tops, with the effect of a raucous voice breaking into a dream. Everywhere, it seemed, a band was playing the same tune, though, when Vivien strained her ears to catch the melody, there was no music. The constantly occurring "*Oeufs, Beurre, Fromage*" on shop-fronts suddenly gave her the cue, and thereafter they rolled smoothly along the boulevards or rattled through the streets to the refrain of "Butter and Eggs and a Pound of Cheese; Butter and Eggs and a Pound of Cheese."

They swung past the dark square mass of the Louvre and across a bridge, where the water burned with crawling caterpillars of coloured fire, to their hotel on the Quai d'Orsay.

Waking early to the refrain of "Butter and Eggs and a Pound of Cheese,"—though she had no longer the sense of a band playing,—Vivien found that the atmosphere of make-believe had translated itself into one of passionate reality. What she had taken for play was work none the less for being carried on with verve and gusto. There seemed in Paris to be no period of half-waking, of querulous uncertainty about the day's business. By the time she joined her mother

and Selwyn at their *café-au-lait*, Paris had greeted the new day with a cheer. Already the black-dressed, bareheaded girls trod their dancing measure to the band that was not, up from the rookeries of the Left Bank over the bridges and through the sunny Gardens of the Tuileries on their way to the big shops in the rue St. Honoré ; already the little soldiers in their make-believe uniforms were fierce-eyed and alert, as if the guns of the enemy were even then thundering at their gates.

Selwyn Harpur, as even Mrs. Eady admitted, was an admirable cicerone. He unrolled Paris before them like a map, stopping here and there as if with an enthusiastic forefinger. "We must see this and that. Don't forget to remind me to show you the Rodin's when we're at the Luxembourg — and oh, we mustn't miss the Lamouroux concert on Sunday afternoon."

To the two ladies, overpowered and confused by their surroundings, his knowledge was immense. Nor was he too set on "improvement," too much the schoolmaster abroad. He showed them that he could be gay and frivolous—even a trifle naughty. He took them to some of the smaller theatres in the Latin Quarter, and one evening they peeped into a scandalous haunt in Montmartre, where sly poets declaimed verses which made mature but

emancipated-looking ladies glance down demurely at their "bocks" on the narrow table before them while their shoulders quivered with silent laughter. Afterwards they sat till midnight on the boulevard, eating pea-nuts, listening to the lilting "trip, trip" of passing feet, and watching the endless procession. Students in black cloaks and velvet pegtop trousers pacing to the measure of high hopes for the regeneration of art and literature ; ravishingly dressed women, with set faces but roving eyes, swinging slowly by and leaving a trail of Parma violet or lily of the valley on the tobacco-scented air. Now a couple of ragged men with cut-throat faces came tearing along the kerb, yelling "*La Patrie*" or "*La Presse*," as if all Europe were burning ; now a file of sandwichmen lined up before the café and, removing their illuminated top-hats, bowed gravely to display the name of a tooth-powder stencilled on their bald wigs.

For a week the novelty and the high pitch of it all kept Vivien in a state of dazed excitement, wiping out the recent past. But by and by the past began to come back in little patches—her last meeting with Stott, the valley ablaze with gorse, the figure of Hugh, tense and eager, his arm flung back to throw a fly. And oddly enough these pictures seemed to fit in with her present environment : there was a hidden con-

nection running through them, which she could not yet understand. The image of Selwyn Harpur began somehow to suffer in comparison. It seemed as if Paris was after all proving a severer test of him than even Penolver had been. That he should fail to satisfy her imagination in the presence of the sea, on the moors, or in the company of burly farmers at Adrian Races, was perhaps only natural ; but here in the centre of civilisation, in his own element, surrounded by the pick of life and art, he ought to have cut a commanding figure. He did not, and little by little, by comparison with the life about her and her remembered pictures of Penolver, so strangely related, Vivien began to recognise what was wrong with him—his wooden eclecticism none the less absurd for being brought up to the last moment, his intolerance of everything in life or art or literature which had not been confirmed by some arbitrary standard of his own choosing. He was, in consequence, as if built in sections, and Vivien began to hear the different sections of him clicking and creaking together. She began to notice quite little things in his intercourse with strangers—a girl in a photograph-shop controlling her flexible eyebrows while she attended to his careful orders ; ironical gleams coming into the grave eyes of a painter whose studio they visited, as with polite agree-

ment he listened to Selwyn's excursions in art-criticism. Vivien suspected that Selwyn's picking and choosing, his holding aloof, was a cowardice, a fumbling with life. Here in Paris, whether it were vice or virtue, scholarship or brutality, the creation of the mind or the common toil of the hands, men and women put their whole hearts into whatever they did, and that was why it looked like a game. More and more as Vivien found her feet and was able to look about her with a detached mind, she recognised that what she had mistaken for make-believe was whole-heartedness and gusto for the thing of the moment. The discovery threw a vivid light on her own difficulties in the past, and she understood that not by fastidious selection, but only by intensity and singleness of purpose, could real knowledge be attained. It was less a matter of method than of impulse: if she did not passionately desire any part of life or learning with her blood as well as with her intelligence, then it was not good for her. Books were right and she was right, but she had been approaching them the wrong way, and therefore they had failed her. Literature and art were not things apart from life: they were the flower, the fine finish of life itself. If they were not that, then they were mere lumber.

Stott's words on her first visit to his house

came back to her with an intense conviction of their truth—

“Can you do it easily? If anything you do is an awful bother, it is nearly certain that you are going the wrong way about it. But that is true of more than gardening, isn't it?” •

Ironically, it was in the Louvre, and before the objects of her lover's special admiration, that it came upon her with a rush that the instincts she had so distrusted were right—right all through. There was a fitness in the place and the occasion. It was through her mind that she had been led astray, and it was through her mind, by a fine perception of beauty, that she came to herself again.

They had been standing at the head of the great white marble staircase between the *Victory of Samothrace* and the Botticelli frescoes. Selwyn had said all the appropriate things, and with Mrs. Eady passed into the *Galerie d'Apollon*. Vivien lingered, and as she looked from the newly alighted figure with the ecstasy of flight in the broad wings and the lines of the drapery, to *Giovanna Tornabuoni*, calm with the calmness of infinite emotion, she suddenly understood that in spite of the centuries between them and from them to the present hour, they, with the business of the street, books, the wild rush of horses at Adrian Races, Stott's pride in his farm, and Hugh's

delight in a good cast, were all different expressions of the same joy in life. There was no enmity, no division, between any of these things, and whatever destroyed the unity of life by exalting one set of faculties, one part of one's nature above another, was wrong, and eternally wrong.

Selwyn came back to look for her. She followed him through the long galleries in a sort of stupor. She was exhausted by her excitement, and the slippery parquet made her ankles ache. Pictures long familiar by reproduction greeted her with a new meaning. Titian's *Man with a Glove* seemed gravely to say "So you have found out at last?" and *Mona Lisa* slyly nodded, "I know, I know."

As if from an immense distance came Selwyn's voice with trite observations, the last dicta of the connoisseur, upon this picture and that. Remarks every bit as foolish as Mrs. Marlow's "I don't think she can have been a lady."

"Yes, that's genuine. You won't care for the Rubens, but we must look at the Vandykes. And there's a Franz Hals in one of the little rooms which is an education." Chatter, chatter, chatter; bleat, bleat, bleat: "Butter and Eggs and a Pound of Cheese."

Vivien felt that she was getting hysterical. She wanted to scream. If only she could be left alone with the pictures that understood!

Pity for Selwyn and pity for herself came over her. They were shutting themselves up in a cage of conventions away from life. Why wouldn't he understand? He was so good, so kind, so well-meaning, so fine even in his defects. Whatever she thought of him, she was bound to respect him. Yes, whatever happened, respect remained.

"Yes, yes, that's beautiful," she was answering mechanically, when her mother caught sight of her white face.

"Why, Vivien, you're tired out," she said.

Vivien sat down on one of the red velvet covered seats and began to cry. Selwyn was at her side in a moment with remorseful apologies.

"How stupid and thoughtless of me, dear! I should have noticed. We've been trying to do too much in one day."

Mrs. Eady was more practical.

"Let's go and have a cup of tea at Colombin's," she said.

CHAPTER XX

THEY drove past the crowded arcades of the rue de Rivoli, and turned up the side street to Colombin's. At first it seemed as if they would not find a table. The place was thronged with women, chiefly American.

"I told Mamie to rub her limbs with embrocation and put flannel on to her chest nights—— Say, don't that gurl look sick!" greeted them at the door.

Vivien had managed to control herself, but she wanted a cup of tea badly. The babel of voices, the strident American accent mingling with the sweet, birdlike tones of the waiting-women, and the clatter of cups, confused her. People looked up at them curiously as they tried to make their way between the crowded tables. A handsome young Frenchman with the ribbon of some Order in his buttonhole glanced at Vivien with concern, and from her to Harpur. He turned away with a tiny shrug of his shoulders. It was as if he understood.

They passed through the archway into the farther room. There, sitting with her back to the wall, and eating a muffin with a black-handled knife and fork, while her light, appreciative eyes took in the crowd, stout, rubicund, shabby and British, was Mrs. Hyde.

"Ah, here you are at last!" she said, looking oddly at Vivien. "You bad girl, why didn't you write? I might have left Paris without seeing you at all. You'd better squeeze in here—I believe it's your only chance. Perhaps you'll get served in time."

She made room for them at her table. Harpur looked embarrassed, but there was no way out of it. Probably of all the people he knew, the one he least wanted to see at that moment was the keen-eyed old playwright.

"It's excellent tea," she said to Mrs. Eady. "I mean to find out where they get it. 'St, 'st—*Ici, mademoiselle, tay, twaw*. Though to be sure," she added to Vivien, "you look as if a wiski-soda would do you more good. What? Too many pictures? Ah yes," she nodded sympathetically. "Mr. Harpur ought to know better."

The tea and the crowd steadied Vivien's nerves. She felt somehow as if Mrs. Hyde could help her, and she was soon talking cheerfully about what they had seen.

"Oh, by the way," said Mrs. Hyde suddenly,

"have you heard about poor little Hugh Stott?"

Selwyn shot a quick, uncomfortable glance at Vivien.

"What is it?" she asked, whitening a little.

"He's very ill," said Mrs. Hyde.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" broke from the three at once.

"I had a letter from Humphrey Stott forwarded on to me," went on Mrs. Hyde. "I can hardly make top or tail of it. The poor fellow seems off his head. Somebody told the boy that—— But of course you don't know *that*."

Vivien set down her cup.

"Please tell us, Mrs. Hyde," she said quietly.

"Well, it's no secret now," said Mrs. Hyde, "because the boy knows. To begin with—he isn't Stott's son, you know."

"Yes, I know," said Selwyn unguardedly, in his anxiety to stop her tongue. To be quite fair to him, he meant to tell Vivien when they got back to their hotel, but he did not think she was in a fit state to hear any exciting news now. The three women looked at him, and he felt the colour rising into his cheeks.

"I didn't know," said Vivien simply, and turned away her head from him. She was calm enough now.

"Nor I," said Mrs. Eady.

"I've known for years," said Mrs. Hyde, with a not displeased little twist of her mouth. And she told them the story.

"I very nearly gave the show away the first day I met you," she said to Vivien; "but Stott shut me up. Of course I've felt all along that Humphrey Stott was foolish not to tell the boy, but you know what he is. I wanted to do it myself, but he wouldn't let me. Lately he's been afraid, and as things have turned out, it looks as if his fears were justified. It was the parson's sister, Mrs. Fleming, who told Hugh. Did Mrs. Fleming tell you?" she asked Harpur.

Vivien guessed the truth, and waited in an agony lest he should lie. But he did not.

"Yes," he said.

"Thought so," said Mrs. Hyde, with a snap of her jaws. "Well, I guess Humphrey Stott would have given all he's worth to have known a fortnight ago that Mrs. Fleming knew. But that's a detail. You remember when I first met her at your house she talked to Hugh about inviting her to go to see him at school? Well, I thought at the time that there was something in her head, though I wouldn't like to say that she meant any mischief then. I rather think that something happened since," she interpolated in parenthesis. "However,

she got Hugh to invite her to the school on Founder's Day, at the end of the term, when the boys have some sort of an entertainment. She petted him and pitied him—'got all over him,' as Hugh would say, until he didn't know whether he was standing on his head or his heels. Then she told him that the dirty little poetaster who called to see him during the term before, was his father—and it looks as if it was going to kill him. Whatever the woman's motive was Heaven only knows—and possibly Stott."

Vivien thought she knew, but she didn't say so.

"But didn't Hugh tell Mr. Stott at once?" she asked Mrs. Hyde.

"No; that's the worst of it," said she. "He didn't: he brooded. You see, it all fitted in so horribly pat with Lorraine's visit to him, and the questions he asked, and all that mystery about the inquest. It was a few days before breaking-up that Mrs. Fleming told him, and at first when he went home he didn't say anything about it. Stott noticed that he seemed quiet and out of sorts and asked him questions, but the boy seemed to have frozen up. Then he began to be seriously ill, and Stott had to send for Dr. Pascoe, who said that Hugh was in for jaundice. Dr. Pascoe suspected some mental

trouble, and he seems to have managed Hugh better than Stott, for it all came out to him. Just think of the agony of mind that boy must have suffered ! It's the awful smash-up of confidence, you see. For many things, I'm glad it's all over—if only the boy will pull round."

"But is he worse ?" asked Mrs. Eady anxiously.

"That's what I can't make out," said Mrs. Hyde. "Humphrey Stott's letter is hardly coherent ; it's full of self-reproaches. He seems to be getting superstitious ; he says it's all a judgment because he hasn't been loyal to the boy—though what he means by that I'm sure I don't know. So far as I can gather, the worst of the attack is over ; but the boy can't or won't rouse himself. He doesn't seem to care ; he just lies there and says ' Thank you ' and ' I'm sorry to be such a bother ' to everything that's done for him. Oh, it's ghastly !"

Her blue eyes flooded, and she suddenly turned away her head.

The publicity of the place kept them all more or less restrained. Harpur dared not look at Vivien, but he was astonished by the coolness and self-possession of her voice and manner. She seemed to have matured suddenly in half an hour. He was too intelligent not to recognise that she was in no mood to use nice discrimination

of judgment. It would be no use for him to plead, as he might with some justice have done, that Mrs. Fleming had told him the story in confidence and asked him not to repeat it. It would be no use to point out the obvious truths that Stott himself was chiefly to blame in the first instance, and that no outsider could have been expected to foresee the disastrous consequences of Mrs. Fleming's indiscretion or malice. Without properly understanding Mrs. Fleming's motive in so particularly warning him not to tell Vivien the story, he bitterly acknowledged the soundness of her judgment. If Vivien had been "head-over-ears" in love with him, she could have forgiven him even the slander he had spoken against Stott. There were some disadvantages in an affection based on mutual respect, after all.

"I thought once of going over to see what I could do," said Mrs. Hyde, "but you know what Humphrey Stott is. He might resent it."

She waited for a moment, as if she had thrown out a suggestion. Nobody spoke, and she continued—

"And, anyhow, I believe that Mrs. Ford is a very capable person."

When they were leaving the place, and Harpur took the little *addition*—which by a mistake of the harried waitress included Mrs. Hyde's—to the paying counter, Mrs. Hyde was at his elbow.

"I'll pay for my own, if you please, Mr. Harpur," she said, and those were the only words she had spoken to him since her "Thought so."

"I'm so sorry, dear," she murmured to Vivien, as she shook hands, with the queer little double jerk characteristic of her, "but I had to do it. Be brave, and be quite sure what you really want. If I can help you—I'm stopping at an old haunt of mine off the Boulevard Montparnasse."

She gave her the address.

During the drive to the hotel Vivien looked quite composed, though rather pale. She hardly spoke to either Selwyn or her mother. A passage out of *Virginibus Puerisque*—Selwyn had given her the book on her last birthday; they had re-read it together among the gorse on the cliffs at Penolver—was running in her head—

"The cruellest lies are often told in silence. A man may have sat in a room for hours and not opened his teeth, and yet come out of that room a disloyal frier-d or a vile calumniator."

Even that, she feared, was hardly strong enough for her lover's action. Little more than an hour ago she had said to herself—

"Whatever happens, respect remains."

In the vestibule of the hotel she detained him for a moment.

"There's just one thing I want to ask you,

Selwyn," she said slowly and painfully, as if the words came from a great distance and only with an effort of memory. "When you said that there was something about Mr. Stott and another man's wife, did you know this then?"

He did not answer for a moment, and she said—

"Please don't say anything; I see that you did."

Her eyes filled with tears, and she turned away and went slowly upstairs.

Mrs. Eady hoped that she would break down and have it out then. That she did not was perhaps due to the inner torturing knowledge that though Mrs. Hyde's news had saddened her it had also brought her a feeling of relief. Her emotions were too complicated to be expressed in simple grief. During the evening she was so quiet and natural in her behaviour to Selwyn that an outsider would not have known that anything had happened to disturb their confidence.

In the morning she came early to her mother's bedroom, fresh and calm-eyed, though she had not slept.

"Mother, do you care about stopping in Paris?" she asked.

"Not a bit," said Mrs. Eady.

"I want to go home," said Vivien, turning away her head with a gasp.

Probably Mrs. Eady had never in her life

heard anything that pleased her more. She was not usually demonstrative of her affection, but now she held the sobbing girl in her arms and fairly babbled over her.

Selwyn did not seem very surprised to hear their decision, when he met them in the *salle à manger*. He turned a shade paler, and said, "Yes, I suppose that will be best. I'll make arrangements at once."

But he had a harder blow to bear. As he was leaving the table, Vivien called him back.

"It seems a pity to spoil your holiday," she said, without looking at him. "We can quite well travel alone—can't we, mother?"

"Oh yes," said Mrs. Eady, frightened by Vivien's new air of authority.

He took it like a man.

"Very well," he said, after a moment's hesitation. "If you would really prefer that I did not come with you, I'll stop."

Vivien and her mother travelled by night by the Newhaven route. Harpur saw them off at St. Lazare, and as he walked with Vivien up and down the broad upper gallery, under the fizzling arc lights, where the archways leading to the platforms gave upon utter darkness and the noise of parting, he tried to find out how she felt towards him.

"I can't give you an answer now, Selwyn,

indeed I can't," she said penitently, in reply to some allusion of his to the future. "I want to get away and straighten things out. Don't think me hard; I've no right to judge you—I've not been altogether honest myself."

CHAPTER XXI

DIRECTLY they reached home, Vivien wrote to Stott—

“Please send me any news about Hugh. We met Mrs. Hyde in Paris, and she told us everything. It is not necessary to tell you that neither my mother nor I knew anything about Hugh’s history. I suppose you had good reasons for allowing your friends to misunderstand and misjudge you, but——”

Then she tore up the sheet. It would be cruelty to remind Stott now of the mistake he had made. Undoubtedly Stott had made a mistake in the beginning, and Vivien was not blind to his defects—to the mixture of pride and fear which had prevented him from correcting the mistake before the matter was taken out of his hands. That there was another motive besides pride and fear she did not recognise. She was glad to remember, however, that from Mrs. Hyde’s account of her arguments with Stott on the subject he had apparently never

pleaded his promise to Hugh's mother as a reason for silence. To have kept silence under the circumstances, on account of even a promise made to a dying woman, would have been a foolish punctilio, but Vivien reflected that a weaker man, or one less honest, would have quoted the promise as an excuse for evading the responsibility he dreaded. Vivien began another letter to Stott, asking him to tell her how Hugh was going on, and merely adding the bald statement, "My mother and I did not know," thus excluding Harpur without comment.

On the afternoon of the second day she received a telegram from Stott:—

"I believe you can save his life."

For a moment she wondered why he had not prepaid a reply, but the next she understood, and flushed and trembled. She knew by instinct that whether she went down to Cornwall or not, whatever the effect upon Hugh, there were other consequences involved in her decision. It was only then that she understood clearly why, in any case and independently of her disillusion, she could not marry Selwyn Harpur. She sent no answer to Stott's telegram.

She took the slip of paper to her mother without a word. Mrs. Eady read the message, and after looking up into her face for a moment said—

"We'll go down by the nine-fifty."

But before they started, Vivien wrote to Selwyn Harpur:—

“I see now that I am the more to blame. If you had been quite sure that I knew my own mind, you would not have thought it necessary to tell an untruth. But that very doubt makes it clear to me that I must not marry you. I do not blame you for doubting me; indeed, I can only beg you to forgive me for not asking you earlier to release me from my engagement. I know that you do not want me to tell you that I have never been disloyal to you, but the mere fact that it was possible for me to be disloyal to you proves that I ought to have spoken.”

After she had written the letter, she saw by the light of her new knowledge that the one word “mind” in the second sentence was in itself a sufficient criticism of her engagement to Selwyn Harpur and a full explanation of her wish to break it off. But she did not alter the word. Selwyn would understand. Before closing the envelope, she considered whether she ought to tell Selwyn that she was going down to Penolver, but finally decided that she need not. If he cared, as she believed he cared, it would be gratuitous cruelty; and she knew him well enough to feel sure that his sense of justice would make him regard her going down, when he heard

of it, as an act of expiation for both of them. Whatever might come of her journey to Penolver, Selwyn was too high-minded to mistake her motive in undertaking it.

It was so unlike Stott to ask help of anybody that both Vivien and her mother read in his telegram the despairing cry of a man driven to his last resources. Hugh must be very seriously ill. Mrs. Eady, with her simpler and more practical mind, decided that Hugh had taken a turn for the worse, and that with the not uncommon perversity of a sick child he was refusing food or medicine from the only nurses available. Vivien imagined more terrible complications, and to the words of Stott's telegram she mentally added "and reason." As they sat in the train rushing through the night, busy with their own thoughts, each found some comfort in remembering Mrs. Hyde's account of Stott's distracted state of mind. Perhaps after all it was only that Stott's nerve had suddenly given way.

Vivien took it as a good omen that the dawn broke while they were crossing the border from Devonshire into Cornwall. A grey dawn, quiet and cold. The mystical, twilight names of Eastern Cornwall, "Doublebois," "Lostwithiel," came upon her senses like voices of the dawn itself. The wooded valleys drowned in mist, the

austere uplands, a momentary vision of the sea, pale and remote, had a quality of reserve as of the beginning of things.

Vivien was glad that her mother slept : she wanted to be alone for this hour of preparation. For in spite of her great anxiety about Hugh she felt that she herself was to be given another trial while Nature looked on. There was no definite hope or counsel to be read in the face of Nature, but there was at least no threat or discouragement. It was a blank page.

Now that she was being brought in face of one of the elementary problems of life, a sick child, she felt how badly she was equipped for the encounter. And she was filled with passionate remorse for neglected opportunities. Her nature was not wanting in the divine instincts of sympathy and compassion, but she had ignored them in her zeal for imaginary self-improvement. It was as if in pursuit of some illusion painted on the air, she had trampled over a garden of flowers. Now the illusion was gone out, and with a sense of ignorance and incapacity she began to tend the bruised stalks and drooping heads of the flowers.

In the grey light her mother looked old and worn. Her head was grotesquely leaning to one side ; her mouth was open, her bonnet awry. Her thin, blue-veined hands were folded in her lap. Looking at her mother, Vivien felt how she

had neglected her in the past. How foolishly she had despised the counsels of that wise, tired head ! how little she had appreciated the loving services of those dear hands ! She might have done so much for her mother, and learned so much from her in return.

Her tears came easily as April rain, and with something of the consolation of April rain. Whatever she was coming to at the end of her journey, she was at least coming to herself, and the knowledge gladdened her. She had the feeling of wholeness and sanity. What did it matter whether she herself was learned or ignorant, when there were so many things waiting for her to do ? She was almost overpowered by a sense of the fulness of life and the shortness of days. Now that she was no longer bound by a vow to learning, that in turn became a source of consolation. Books had become distasteful because she had violated them by giving them only her intelligence—by reading them apart from life.

When the train stopped at Truro, Mrs. Eady woke up and straightened her bonnet, with a confused apology for her weariness. A farmer and his wife, the man silent and self-reliant, the woman talkative and anxious, got into their compartment. Vivien remembered that it was market day at Porthlew. She looked at the new-comers, listening to the woman's eager ques-

tions and the man's quiet replies with a new curiosity. They were her fellow-creatures, and she had everything to learn about them; she must make haste to learn. It was not the idea of coming into the country that awakened her interest in the common things of life: she understood now, once and for always, that it is possible to live close to Nature in Bloomsbury.

She got out of the train at Porthlew with an irresistible feeling of coming home. It seemed hardly possible that little more than a fortnight ago she had left Cornwall with, so far as she knew, no intention of ever returning. Anxiety kept both her and her mother silent during their drive to Penolver. As they went slowly down the side of the valley, Vivien observed with satisfaction that there was a card bearing the words "To be let Furnished" in the window of the cottage: she would have been disappointed to find the place already occupied by strangers. The driver took off the brake, and they rolled across the bridge and up the hill on the other side of the stream. At the corner there were the same two children who had walked with Vivien on the morning when she met Stott by the cross, and he talked about Death. They still wore the look of complicity with the morning, and eyed her reproachfully as a deserter to the Olympians. She leaned back in her seat and smiled and nodded

to them, as if to assure them that she had recovered her better wisdom.

When they reached Rosemorran, and the driver got down to unfasten the white gate, Vivien noticed little things that brought the tears into her eyes. Stott was always very careful of his tools and implements, but now, just inside the gate, there was a garden rake rusting on the border, where he had laid it down days before. The hedge of sweet peas which he had been sowing on the afternoon of her first visit to his house had been "topped" during the summer and had put forth a second blossoming; but the ungathered flowers had been suffered to run to seed—a most eloquent sign of the disturbance in his usual habits.

Stott hearing the sound of carriage wheels, himself met them at the door.

"I knew you'd come, Dear," he said impulsively, as he took Vivien by both hands and drew her into the house. He seemed as if exalted by suffering to a mood in which he spoke his thoughts nakedly, without regard for formal observances. His bloodshot eyes had a vacant stare in them, his hair and beard were in disorder, and his cheeks were fallen in. Apparently he had not slept for several nights. He answered Mrs. Eady's questions quickly and mechanically.

"No, he's no worse—just the same. Pascoe

says he'll pull through, but he's dreadfully weak. Oh yes, thank you, we've managed all right for nurses. Mrs. Ford is equal to anything, and Mrs. Marlow has been very good. She comes every day. Hugh likes her; she can get him to do what I can't. I keep out of his way as much as possible, except at night. Pascoe thinks it's better, because—oh yes, of course you know all about that. Mrs. Hyde told you. . . . He says I'm kind—he says I'm kind.”

His voice broke hoarsely, and he turned away his head.

“Did Hugh know we were coming?” Vivien asked him.

“No,” said Stott, looking momentarily confused, as if through his present trouble he were dimly conscious that he had acted extravagantly.

“But it was he that gave me the idea of asking you,” he continued, looking at Vivien in an apologetic way, pitiful to witness. “He's very fond of you, Miss Eadie, you know. He talked about you when he was light-headed. Pascoe thought it was a good idea, but of course I didn't know where to find you. Then your letter came, when was it? Yes, yesterday. Mrs. Marlow was here at the time, and she thought I might——”

“And so you reckoned on me,” said Vivien gladly.

"Yes, I reckoned on you," he said vaguely, as if to ask "Why not?"

He went on to talk about his difficulties with Hugh. He was a good patient, he said, a very good patient—very obedient. But he didn't seem to care; he wasn't interested in getting better.

"Pascoe says he must be roused, but directly he picks up a bit he begins to fret and worry and talk about going away to earn his living—that sort of thing. He's so devilish quick: the illness seems to have sharpened up his memory. He remembers everything I ever said to him, and twists it round the wrong way."

He told them about his injudicious attempt to find out what Hugh wanted to do when he was grown up.

"That comes of meddling," he said savagely. "You see the exasperating construction he puts upon it? He thinks that I wanted to prepare him before turning him out. I'm not sure that he doesn't half believe that I got that hell-cat Mrs. Fleming to tell him. He doesn't trust me a bit. He knows that I'm fond of him, but he looks at me in a knowing sort of way, as if he wanted to ask, 'Is that true, or are you only saying it to please me?' God! he's taken my foolish preaching well enough to heart."

"When can I see him?" asked Vivien, cutting him short.

"Any time you like," he said eagerly. Evidently he had a pathetic belief in her power to influence Hugh.

"He'd better be told first," said Mrs. Eady composedly. "You leave him to us, Mr. Stott, and go to bed, there's a good man."

Mrs. Ford was sent for and told to prepare Hugh. When she came down again to take Vivien upstairs, Stott was out of the room.

"I'm so glad you've come," she said in a tone which reassured the Eadys. "I wish you'd persuade the master to go away," she added.

"Oh, we'll manage Mr. Stott," said Mrs. Eady cheerfully.

A little, shrunken, yellow face looked at Vivien over the bedclothes. Her first thought was that it seemed incredible now that Hugh could ever have been taken for Stott's child. His thin lips were drawn back over his teeth in a ghastly grin as he held out a limp, skinny hand.

"I'm so glad you've come to see me, Miss Eady," he said, with grotesque politeness. "I'm sorry I can't get up, but I really can't help it, you know. Everybody's been very good to me since I've been ill. Mr. Stott is most awfully kind."

Vivien bent over and kissed him on the forehead.

"Silly boy!" she said lightly, and sat down on the edge of the bed.

CHAPTER XXII

THOUGH by a happy accident Vivien had hit upon the right way to set about managing Hugh, her task was not an easy one. He left off saying "Mr. Stott" before her, but it was evident that he was determined to think of his foster-father by that name in private. He was very crafty in concealing his thoughts. For days at a time he would behave in the most exemplary manner, taking his medicine, and suffering himself to be tidied with only the amount of protest that might have been expected. All the time he wouldn't mention Stott, unless he were in the room, when he talked to him with cheerful civility; and Vivien would begin to flatter herself that the worst of the struggle was over and that Hugh had decided to become reconciled to things as they were. Then, without any warning, he would spring some question upon her, such as—

"Suppose my father was alive, what would I have to call him?"

And, before she saw the implication of her words, she said—

“Why, father, I suppose.”

Then Hugh turned away his head and smiled bitterly, so that she wanted to get up and shake him. If he had only said “pater” in asking the question, she thought, she wouldn’t have fallen into the trap.

The diabolical subtlety of a boy’s mind was a revelation to her, and she shivered to think how nearly she had escaped, not the temporary management of one boy, but the permanent responsibility of a score of boys, each with a special talent for some form of moral persecution. Sometimes she appealed to Hugh’s affection for herself.

“You must please yourself how you treat your pater, but when you say things like that you hurt me,” she said; and Hugh pulled the clothes up to his chin, and with real penitence in his dark eyes murmured—

“Sorry, Miss Eady. I won’t say what I’m thinking about again.”

Then he turned his head on the pillow and shut his eyes, until Vivien was nearly frantic, wondering what new problem was bothering his brains.

Occasionally she lost her temper with him. Once when he said, “But, you see, Miss Eady,

"I'm not Hugh Stott at all," she retorted, "Well, what are you, then? You're not Hugh Lorraine, because that was only an assumed name of your father's."

Hugh looked at her with deep reproach, and said—

"Well, you needn't rag a fellow about it."

For a whole day she felt sure that he was with all his might acting the lugubrious part of a boy without a name. He really seemed to have inherited something of his father's talent for pitying himself and for make-believe generally. Vivien never knew whether his questions were prompted by a genuine desire to be helped out of a difficulty or only to get moral support and "atmosphere" for the rôle of the moment.

Sometimes he was seized with a violent attack of remorse for his unfilial references to Lorraine. He seemed to remember every detail of the latter's appearance and manner, and would go over them with a sort of gloomy satisfaction, concluding with—

"He did look a sweep, you know, but after all he was my father. Mr.—the pater—was frightfully angry with Mrs. Fleming for telling me, wasn't he? I don't like Mrs. Fleming one little bit,—I think she's a cad,—but I do believe she meant to do the pater a good turn, else why did she do it? You see, a fellow don't

like to tell another fellow that he's kept him long enough. And she did try to let me down as easily as possible. She said that my father was a genius. Well, I suppose that's something to be proud of—even if he did drink too much whisky and didn't wash. I must get his books and read them when I get better," he added gravely.

Then he took the line of the earnest seeker after truth.

"Ought I to be sorry or glad that my father was drowned?" he asked, startling Vivien, who had imagined him asleep. "I'm sure that he was coming to arrange about keeping me, you know, and I'm afraid I shouldn't have liked that."

Vivien did not care to spoil his generous opinion of the dead by assuring him that it was extremely improbable that Lorraine had any such intention, so she compromised matters by saying—

"Oh, I suppose they"—Hugh blinked cunningly, and she could almost see his lips forming the words "my two fathers"—"they would have made some sort of an arrangement between them. You could have stayed first with one and then with the other, you know."

"But where would he—my pukka father, I mean—have got the money? John Prowse

said that they only found a few coppers and some—some pawn tickets in his pockets. Do you know, Miss Eady, I'm afraid my father was a sponge—like I am, though I don't want to be. It's most unfortunate my being ill just when I've found out, and ought to begin trying to pay back the pater for all he's done for me."

One good effect of these discussions was to keep Hugh's mind from brooding over his bodily weakness. While his brain was so busy he took his food without thinking. Vivien was quick to see and make use of her advantage. Whenever Hugh showed a disposition to become argumentative she would have something ready, and he would sit up swallowing mouthful after mouthful while enforcing his points with the spoon.

Gradually, as Hugh got stronger, Stott began to lengthen his visits to the room, and they dropped into something like their old relations, though with a heart-breaking difference. The most painfully significant thing to Vivien was that as yet Stott evidently preferred not to be left alone with the boy.

Before the end of September Hugh was up and dressed, and sitting on a deck-chair out on the grass-plot in front of the house. He was still rather uncertain on his legs, and his manner had altered a good deal. He was very thought-

ful and considerate, and distressingly polite to everybody.

Until now Vivien and Stott had seen comparatively little of each other, and their anxiety about Hugh had kept them from thinking about themselves. Mrs. Eady and Stott, on the contrary, had been thrown very much together, and very naturally they talked about Vivien. She had surprised both of them by her rapid mastery of the situation.

"Though, as I told you," said Mrs. Eady triumphantly, "I knew it was in her, if only something happened to bring it out. If you knew the difference it makes to me to see her doing something really human, with her heart in it, and to know that I can share her thoughts and feelings, you wouldn't wonder that I'm sometimes callous enough to be glad that Mrs. Fleming is a malicious little cat."

"Oh, in a way I'm not sorry it happened," he said, with an uneasy laugh, "if only Hugh comes out all right."

"Hugh 'll come out all right, if you let him alone," she assured him.

Vivien had not thought it necessary to tell Stott that Mrs. Fleming had confided her discovery to Selwyn Harpur some time before she told Hugh; but Mrs. Eady had no scruples, and frankly spoke her mind about Selwyn Harpur.

"And although I knew all this, he gave us to understand that you had run away with another man's wife. Personally," she said composedly, "I wasn't very much disturbed. It wasn't our business, anyhow, and it was a very human thing to do. But it made all the difference to Vivien."

"I knew there was something," he said.

"It was everything, Mr. Stott," she said gravely.

Stott's behaviour puzzled her. She supposed that he understood that Vivien had broken off her engagement to Selwyn Harpur; but, as she said to Mrs. Marlow, "Anyhow, he ought to find that out for himself, if he's interested," thus disclosing her own wishes in the matter—if there could ever have been any doubt about them. Still Stott did not speak, though now that Hugh's recovery left his mind comparatively free from anxiety his inclination was obvious in his every glance at Vivien as she sat at his table or moved about the house.

"Is it possible that the overbearing creature takes her for granted without saying anything?" thought Mrs. Eady in desperation.

On a bright afternoon towards the end of the month Mrs. Marlow called with the pony-carriage to take Hugh for a drive. Perhaps it was on account of a conspiracy between her and Mrs.

Eady that she did not ask ~~Vivien~~ to accompany them.

In the middle of the afternoon Stott came out to Mrs. Eady, as she sat sewing on the lawn.

"Do you think Mr. Jago would sell the cottage?" she said to him.

He looked at her frowningly, with his hands on his knees.

"I don't know, I'm sure," he said.

"Well, I wish you'd try and find out for me," she said indifferently. "Will you?"

"Oh yes, I'll ask Jago," he said. "I suppose you wouldn't want it before—next year?"

"I should like to have it settled as soon as possible," she answered, bending over her work-basket. "I shall have to give six months' notice to my landlord in Kensington, and next Saturday is the twenty-ninth. We must get back to town before the twenty-ninth."

"So soon as that?" he said blankly. After a few minutes, he got up and began to walk up and down the grass.

"Look here," he said abruptly, "is there any reason why I shouldn't speak to Miss Eady?"

"None whatever, that I'm aware of," said Mrs. Eady, biting off her cotton.

"She'll think my getting her down here was a dodge," he said hesitatingly.

Mrs. Eady did not think it necessary to make any comment. She only smiled.

"Where did she go?" he asked roughly.

"I'm sure I don't know," said Mrs. Eady, "but I shouldn't be surprised if you found her on the Quarter-deck."

Vivien looked up from her book as he came striding through the hedges, and she saw what was in his eyes, and her own dropped before them. He sat down on the seat beside her and took her hands. The book slid from her knees to the ground, where it lay disregarded. So nothing was said, after all.

"When did you know?" he asked presently.

"When I saw you here with Mrs. Fleming," she answered.

He looked at her questioningly. Just for a moment he did her the injustice to wonder whether she needed reassuring.

"I'm sorry for her," she said, and meant it.

Hugh came back from his drive in good spirits. Mrs. Marlow looked at Mrs. Eady, who sat alone on the grass.

"I'm sure I may ask you to stop to tea," said Mrs. Eady.

Mrs. Marlow blushed divinely and sat down beside her, and they began to talk about blouses.

Stott and Vivien came into the garden from

THE LAPSE OF VIVIEN EADY

the Rosemorran side, but the two ladies took no notice of them.

"You two look very pleased with yourselves," said Hugh, with something of his old cheeky manner, and then stopped; for, as Vivien came nearer, he saw that she had been crying. But she did not look unhappy, for all that. Hugh cocked an eye at Stott, who gravely beckoned him, and they went into the house.

"Hugh," said Stott, "we're in a difficulty, and we want you to settle it. Supposing I married Miss Eady——"

Hugh's mouth opened, and he stared at them. Then he began to jump up and down.

"Now be steady," said Stott; "it's a serious matter. What would you have to call her?"

Hugh, standing on one leg, looked from him to her and grinned.

"Well, I suppose I should have to call her mater," he said. Then he saw how he had been trapped. He looked up under his brows at Stott and hung his head, and his face twisted oddly. Vivien dropped on her knees and put her arms round him. Stott sneaked out of the room.

Hugh cried for a bit against Vivien's shoulder.

"Well, silly boy?" she said, brushing her cheek against his.

"Oh, you two!" he blurted out, and rubbed his knuckles into his eyes.

When Mrs. Marlow congratulated Vivien, she said—

"I don't quite know whether I ought to apologise to somebody, or for somebody, or the other way about. As you know, I am not at all intellectual. You see, if it hadn't been for Gus's sister, Hugh wouldn't have been ill, and yet——"

Vivien intimated that she had no reason to feel dissatisfied with Mrs. Fleming.

"No, I suppose not," said Mrs. Marlow archly. "Still, it was an abominable thing to do. You know," she continued in a more confidential tone, "Gus is in every way a dear, and ours really was a love match, but still his people are not quite——" She looked round mysteriously. "There's an expression my dear papa used to use sometimes. I'm afraid that though he was in the Church, like many gentlemen of the old school he was rather given to strong language. Well, as he would have said, Elsie Fleming is not quite" — she blushed deeply and brought her face nearer to Vivien's — "not quite sporting!"

Printed by
MORRISON & GIBB LIMITED
Edinburgh

